

the story of one painting and sketching expedition after another, an anecdote here, a sighting of Turner there, all of interest to his fascinated admirers, but slightly repetitive for anyone else. Only one thing gave his life depth and meaning—his paintings, the repositories of all his learning, feeling, philosophy and thought. As an earlier biographer, A. J. Finberg, confided to his son, "The real trouble . . . is, I think, that Turner is a very uninteresting man to write about . . . the only interesting thing about him is that he was the man who painted Turner's pictures."

Despite his most recent biographer's best efforts, this view still seems just. Wilton tries to solve the problem of the sheer tedium of reading about Turner's fragmented existence by relegating the details of his comings and goings to a series of chronologies at the end of each chapter. In theory, this should free him to tell us about the life, but in practice there is little to tell: the man is his art, and the chapters simply go over the chronologies in narrative form. Nevertheless, Wilton has put together a source-book of facts and anecdotes that students will use to check quickly the painter's whereabouts in a given month of a certain year; or to find out what he exhibited and sold from each Royal Academy exhibition; when he moved house; when and on what he lectured; the dates of the publication of his prints; the contents of his library. However, the chronologies are less useful than they might be because the index is inadequate. If one wishes to know a simple fact such as the date on which Turner was elected a Royal Academician, it is not easily plucked out of this book, and it should be.

As a biographer Wilton is appealingly biased. Like Ruskin before him, he is determined to see Turner as a hero, though many a witness steps forward in the pages of his book to tell us that the opposite was true, from Anne Dart, who remarked that at the age of twenty-two the painter "had no faculty for friendship", to Stephen Rigaud, who considered that with Turner "love of money [was] a ruling passion". After his election to the Royal Academy, Turner became deeply involved in the nasty Academy politics of his era ("a little Reptile" Sir Francis Bourgeois called him, to which Turner retorted by describing Bourgeois as "a Great Reptile with ill manners"). The journalist William Jerdan was there when Turner stayed with Sir John Fleming Leicester (later Lord de Tabley) at Tabley Hall in Cheshire, where

In the drawing room stood a landscape on an easel on which his Lordship was at work as the fancy mood struck him. Of course, when assembled for the tedious ballroom before dinner, we all gave out opinions on his progress, its beauties and its defects . . . Turner took the brush and gave a touch, here and there, to mark some improvement. He returned to town, and—*caso ite credidit*—the next morning at breakfast a letter from him was delivered to his Lordship containing a regular bill of charges for "Instruction in Painting". His Lordship tossed it across the table indignantly to me and asked if I could have imagined such a thing; and as indignantly, and against my remonstrances, immediately sent a cheque for the sum demanded by "the drawing master".

Any number of such stories show Turner to have been mean, ill-bred, aggressively competitive towards his rivals, and ruthless towards his children and employees. Wilton does not quite balance these defects in his character by recording instances of affectionate behaviour towards certain children and puppies, his love for his father, and loyalty to friends. Still, one would like to picture Turner as the young Robert Leslie saw him returning from a fishing expedition in Petworth in the 1830s:

Walking behind, admiring the great fish, I noticed as Turner gazed in how the tall dogged on the grass, while his own coat-tails were but little further from the ground; also that a roll of sketches, which I picked up, fell from a pocket in one of these coat-tails, and Turner, after letting my father have a peep at them, tied the bundle up tightly with a bit of the sacred fishing line.

Anyway, who cares what Turner was like? The only one of his defects that really matters is a physical one: he was afflicted with a form of dyslexia. This made it difficult for him to express himself in even the simplest letter, let alone in an epic poem like the *Fallacies of Hope*, described by Wilton as a "jolly-polly pudding of unimpaired syntax and muddled semantics." The great painter with strong ideas and a

brilliant mind could not credit that he was incapable of imitating a poet he admired, like James Thomson, in the same way that he could imitate (and often better) the innovative paintings by David Wilkie or Francis Danby seen on the Academy's walls. Alas, Wilton respects every scrap that Turner wrote, and Gage quotes Turner's poems at length. The ideas behind them may be powerful, but the poems themselves need to be paraphrased to be of much help to us.

John Gage organizes his biography thematically, weaving the events of Turner's life into a generally excellent discussion of his art. At his best, Gage seems to have the same "wonderful range of mind" as his subject. His discussion of Turner's paintings of the burning of the Houses of Parliament lends us into a consideration of the availability of fire-fighting apparatus on the night of the fire, and to the agitation for a national fire-fighting police in the 1830s; or he might take a theme such as royal patronage to give us a succinct account of Turner's long and futile efforts to curry favour with George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria. Gage takes on these broad topics with fluency and authority, and there is much in his book to illuminate the artist and his art. However, he can get bogged down, and some of the book reads as though it were its author's further thoughts on material he has already published. Though I would not hesitate to recommend him to a student, for myself, I think I prefer Cecilia Powell.

In *Turner in the South* Dr Powell painstakingly studies in respect of Turner's art which has never been popular, even with Ruskin—the corpus of work which emerged from his two trips to central Italy in 1819 and 1828. Like Turner himself, she prepares us for the journey of 1819 by considering what the artist learned about Italy before he set out—his reading of Byron, the watercolours he made for James Hakewill's *Picturesque Tour of Italy*, and discussions with his patron, the knowledgeable traveller and connoisseur Sir Richard Colt Hoare. She then follows him on his tour, noting where he went, what he drew, what old masters he saw, and which of his contemporaries he met in Rome. During his visit, Turner filled twenty-three notebooks in six months with watercolours, body colour studies and pencil sketches, frantically seeing and drawing everything he could, not pausing to paint because that could be done on his return home. These revealing notebooks constitute our only source of knowledge about his movements. His lack of education (or rather his self-education) made him a voracious sightseer. Fascinated by everything, he was capable of counting the steps leading up to the cathedral of Faenza or the number of bays in his town hall. Superb though they are, his pencil sketches have the indiscriminate quality of the American tourist let loose in Europe with his camera: he will snap everything he sees and sort it all out when he gets back home. Turner's rather touching innocence also left him at the mercy of his guidebooks, particularly that of the Revd J. C. Eustace. If Eustace did not direct him to the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini (and Turner did not bump into it on his rambles) then he did not seek it out.

Not surprisingly, Turner went south stuffed with a vision of Italy nurtured by his love for the Claudes he knew in England and Paris. He brought to his journey the eighteenth-century notion that he was travelling to see ancient, not modern Italy. But he was far too great an artist not to be struck by the picturesque aspects of the world he actually found there, a world of peasants and friars, of tawdriness and decay amid the classically beautiful landscape. From the beginning, therefore, his responses were much more complex than those of a prodigious re-interpreter Claude, or a successor like Charles Lock Eastlake, whose pictures are simple modern genre. In fact, to understand Turner's attitude towards central Italy, the most helpful comparison is with Turner himself, particularly an English subject such as "Brighton from the Sea" (c.1829) in which the newly built pier is seen from afar like an enchanted palace glowing at sunset; but step up close (as Gage points out) and we discover that the sea in the foreground is full of floating wreckage.

Back in England, Turner tried to pack so many of the contradictions and paradoxes of Italy into his great Academy machines that he overcharged the canvases with symbolic meanings. When Powell finally gets round to discussing them, each is seen to sum up a different aspect of Turner's experience, and none is fully comprehensible unless we have understood everything that went before. In this way such odd, flawed masterpieces as "Rome, from the Vatican: Raffaele, accompanied by La Fornarina, preparing his Pictures for the Decoration of the Loggia" (1820), "The Bay of Baiae with Apollo and the Sibyl" (1823) and "The Forum Romanum, for Mr. Soane's Museum" (1826) make sense for the first time.

One example will have to do. "The Bay of Baiae" is much more than a landscape with ruins and classical figures. Ruskin was the first to put his finger on what the figures are actually doing, and what the landscape in which they sit means. Apollo is shown wooing the Cumaean Sibyl at the moment when he grants her wish that she might live for as many years as there are grains of dust in the earth she holds out to him in her hand. As is usual in these cases, she has neglected to ask for eternal youth, and so will waste away until only her voice is left. But Turner shows the god and sibyl not in ancient Baiae, the luxurious resort of Roman patricians, but in the modern site, in Turner's time a melancholy ruin. Turner has conflated two distinct periods in time, that of the myth and that of the modern world. As Powell writes, "in juxtaposing contrasting and incompatible moments that are supposedly centuries apart, Turner's painting is far closer to poetry than to traditional history painting." This conflation of time has a purpose: his subject is Italy's decline; she too has wasted away, like the sibyl, and like the sibyl is not yet dead; her ancient voice can be heard within the ruins of Baiae.

The theme of the two worlds of Italy, the ancient and the modern, is reinforced by two inscriptions. The first is a quotation from Horace's ode to Calliope inscribed on a fragment of stone in the foreground, "Liquidae placere Baiae", a phrase referring to the Bay's sparkling air. Turner possessed a copy of Robert Anderson's *Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain* in which the author explained that the whole of Horace's ode is about the happiness of those who submit to the will of the gods, and the punishment of those who do not. We may well believe that punishment is what Turner is alluding to in the painting when we read what his guide, Eustace, has to say about the reasons for Baiae's decline:

Baiae became the receptacle of profligacy and effemacy, of lust and cruelty, far beyond the bounds of nature as the power of the imperial monsters was above human control. The beauties of nature were tarnished by the foulness of vice . . . Turner may also have used the symbol of a snake in the foreground to suggest the town's wicked past. As for modern Baiae, Turner exhibited the picture at the Royal Academy with his own line in the catalogue, "Waft me to Sunny Baiae's shore", recollecting the words of Addison's *Letter from Italy* of 1710, "Bear me, some god, to Baiae's gentle seats . . .". Powell even suggests that Turner's line recalls Addison's whole passage on Baiae:

Even the rough rocks with tender myrtle bloom, And trodden weeds send out a rich perfume . . . And all the seasons lavish all their pride: Blossoms, and fruits, and flowers together rise, And the whole year in gay confusion lies.

Certainly the idea of seasonal change was in Turner's mind. He visited the site in November when the weather had turned, so that he painted Baiae in autumnal colours, the embodiment of all his musings on the decline of the ancient world and yet that world's continued presence in modern Italy. The story has often been told of the painter George Jones's amazement on discovering that in the "Bay of Baiae" Turner had imagined hills and planned vineyards where in reality there were none. Jones wrote on the frame the words "SPLENDIDA[B] MENDAX". Turner smiled and said it was all there, and that all poets were liars. He left the inscription on the frame for years.

Poet and liar, in the interests of his compositions, Turner shamelessly shifted the actual position of noble monuments in such apparently straightforward views as his "Forum Romanum". Turner sees the Forum through his own eyes, the eyes of a modern tourist, not

as a fragment of an idealized past. He makes a point of including a procession of friars and kneeling peasants engaged in exotic Catholic rituals, for his theme here is similar to that in the "Bay of Baiae". It was a commonplace of the guidebooks Turner is known to have used that Catholicism was the continuation of the religion of the ancient Romans, and even Gibbon included this particular detail in the passage where he describes his inspiration for writing about the decline and fall of Rome, "as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter . . .". Turner also reminds one of Gibbon in the monotonous sweep of his vision. The painter, like the historian, stands outside the world he is describing, for Turner is a painter of *vedute*, views of buildings and landscapes that he himself never steps into, and so is never surrounded or touched by.

The artist's second visit to Rome in 1828 was very different from the first. This time he came to paint oil paintings which he planned to exhibit in Rome. No longer a tourist, on this trip Turner seems to have set out to establish a European, or at least a Roman, reputation by painting and exhibiting three important pictures in six months. In her satisfying discussions of the "View of Orvieto", "Regulus" and "Vision of Medea" (all 1828) Powell suggests that Turner became increasingly unwilling or unable to illustrate only one aspect of a story. The pictures became more and more complicated (and ambiguous) as Turner included more than one moment in a narrative in the same canvas. One of the great pleasures of her book is that when the author launches into a discussion of a picture, the reader takes a deep breath, not knowing where he is going to end up, whether he will perhaps be considering the cult of Byron, or how Mary Shelley came to write a short story based on a Turner illustration. The "Vision of Medea", to choose one of the most amusing instances, takes us not, as we might expect, to the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca but to a fully illustrated consideration of the career of the great Italian soprano Giudetta Pasta and her appearances in Johann Simon Mayr's *Medea in Corinto*. Pasta's performance unquestionably inspired the painting, even its details. Visitors to the Royal Academy exhibition of May 1831 would have noted that Turner's painting was almost an illustration of the incantation scene in that opera, which happened to be playing in London that spring, with Pasta in the title role. These cultural byways are what make the book such a pleasure. Powell is happy to skip what is not important or to tell us why a painting is not a success; she is not afraid to tell a story, and never searches for the *outré* explanation when a simple one will do.

She does have the great advantage when writing about Turner of taking a relatively confined subject and exploring it in depth. The painter is such a mine of fascinating information that one needs space to pursue all the leads he provides. Like Rubens, Turner should really be studied in a series of corpus volumes; he is too grand a figure to be compressed into one volume, however well done.

The second edition of the National Gallery's *Illustrated General Catalogue* (721pp, National Gallery, £25. 0 947645 04 7), which first appeared in 1973, is revised and updated and provides brief factual information about every painting in the National Gallery Collection, purchased, given or bequeathed up until 1984. Over two thousand paintings are catalogued and illustrated, scaled approximately to their original sizes, and a brief biography of each painter represented accompanies the entries, which are arranged in alphabetical order by artist.

Among recent additions to the collection are Joseph Wright of Derby's "Mr and Mrs Coltman", 1770-72, Odilon Redon's "Ophelia among the Flowers", 1905-08, Murillo's "Portrait of Don Justino de Neve", 1665, Cézanne's "Landscape with Poplars", 1889, Camille Pissarro's "The Avenue, Sydenham", 1879, and "The Seine at Asnières" by Renoir, c.1879. An annual cumulative supplement to the *Illustrated General Catalogue* will appear each April, starting in 1988. The first supplement will include new acquisitions up until the end of 1987.

The father of modern music

Alan Walker

ERNST BURGER
Franz Liszt: Eine Lebenschronik in Bildern und Dokumenten
346pp. Munich: List.
3417771603

PAUL MERRICK
Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt
328pp. Cambridge University Press. £35.
0521326273

KLÁRA HAMBURGER
Liszt
Translated by Gyula Gulyás
243pp. Budapest: Corvina; distributed by Kultúra, Budapest 62, POB 149, Hungary
1387.
9631323056

Liszt studies have come a long way since Kálmán Tisza stood up in the Hungarian legislature, in 1887, and declared the composer to be "a common comedian". That comment, coming as it did from the country's prime minister (albeit one who was Austria's mouthpiece), removed all hope of transferring Liszt's remains to Budapest, and they have languished ever since in alien Bayreuth, beneath the shadow of Richard Wagner. But a hundred years have now elapsed, and books and articles about Liszt continue to pour forth. No one can yet be sure how many new publications of the recent Liszt centenary celebrations will add to the grand total. But at the last count that total had already exceeded 15,000 titles. Today Liszt is widely regarded as the seminal figure in nineteenth-century music—Wagner and Berlioz notwithstanding. Bartók was not wrong to call him the father of modern music.

There is no question that the splendid new iconography compiled by Ernst Burger is one of the best collections of visual material ever devoted to a single composer. Lithographs, photographs (many of them from Burger's own collection and published here for the first

time), concert billings, letters, musical scores, and related biographical paraphernalia bring Liszt's extraordinary personality to life. He lived well into the age of photography and was never averse to posing for the camera, and it is hard to imagine better portraits anywhere than the two mesmeric likenesses taken by Franz Hanfstaengl during Liszt's fleeting trip to Munich in 1858. Also of compelling interest are the magnificent colour reproductions of the oil-portraits by Kaubach, Lauchert and Ary Scheffer. Burger's *Lebenschronik* has a thoughtful introduction by Alfred Brendel, which extends the pianist's well-known advocacy of Liszt.

The book unfolds chronologically, from the composer's birth in 1811 to his death in 1886. Four streams of information are presented simultaneously: iconography, biography, work-lists and plate-captions, so it is possible to establish at a glance where Liszt was, what he was composing, whom he was with, and what he looked like. Unfortunately the publishers have occasionally reduced important documents to a size where detail is lost. One is forced to use a magnifying-glass to decipher the citation on Liszt's certificate of the Freedom of the City of Weimar.

The only serious rival to Burger's book is Robert Bory's *La vie de Franz Liszt par l'image*, published fifty years ago but still admired today. It contains material not to be found in Burger, and will therefore continue to be of value, although the text is not always reliable. It is here that Burger has an advantage, since his biographical chronology rests on a foundation of modern research and he combines new standards of accuracy with admirable brevity. Even so, the vast amount of unpublished material still lying in the archives threatens the texts of the newest works and Burger's has not escaped unscathed. Thus, Agnes Street-Kilndworth died in 1906 (not 1896) according to her newly discovered death certificate. And Burger is surely wrong when he claims that she was not related to Liszt's pupil Karl Klindworth.

Their fathers were brothers (cf *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Volume 12, 1979). According to unpublished letters in Bayreuth, Liszt's son Daniel entered the Lycée Bonaparte in 1850, not 1855; and his daughter Cosima was suckled by a wet-nurse in Genoa, not Cmo.

Of the 650 pictures included in the *Lebenschronik*, only one appears to have been wrongly captioned. The unique photograph of Princess Carolyne's chateau at Woronince in the Ukraine was not taken "about 1930", but rather about 1942. My own copy clearly shows a German Army officer of the Second World War standing in the foreground, which has been cropped from Burger's version. But it is the long series of photographs taken in Liszt's old age that lingers in the memory. By now Liszt was an abbé in the Catholic Church. His leonine head, with its mane of white hair, the clerical collar, and the electrifying eyes had turned him into a photographer's dream. It was a happy chance that brought Louis Hild to Weimar, in 1882, as the court photographer. Held opened his studio in Schillerstrasse, less than half a mile from the Hofgärtnerei (Liszt's residence in Weimar), made friends with the composer, and took scores of pictures of him and his circle during these final years. He even set up his camera in front of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein which assembled in Weimar in 1884 (Liszt was its honorary president), and managed to draw more than 120 members into the picture. The last, nostalgic glimpse we have of Liszt shows the old visionary peering into the distance, unforgettably captured on film by Nadar, as the composer passed through Paris in March 1886, en route for London. Four months later he was dead.

Nadar's picture happens to grace the fly-leaf of Paul Merrick's new book *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt*. It is an apt symbol for the text which follows. Mr Merrick puts forward the most persuasive case so far made for a re-evaluation of Liszt's "religious" works, in particular the two oratorios *Christus und St Elisabeth*, and the *Grande Messe*. His

tory, biography and analysis are woven into a readable narrative which will ensue for it a long and useful life among scholars. It remains to be seen whether Merrick's hypothesis—that the "programmatic" content of the religious music can also be applied to those instrumental works hitherto regarded as "absolute"—will be generally accepted. His view of the B minor Piano Sonata as a musical allegory of the Creation and the Fall of Man is unique. This most famous of all Liszt's compositions has attracted many interpretations, but this is the first time that it has been set in the Garden of Eden. Merrick's identification of "God", "Satan", "Love" and "Redemption" themes will attract opposition, but ought not to be rejected without careful consideration. If true, the hypothesis would point Liszt studies in a completely new direction. Indeed, Merrick himself has already begun the trend by telling us that it is not impossible that the two piano concertos contain programmatic connotations.

A more conventional approach to Liszt and his music is adopted by Klára Hamburger, whose biography (first published in Hungarian in 1980) has been revised and re-issued in English. At last we have a reliable one-volume life of the composer, superior to any other so far published—including the ones by Sitwell, Beckett, and most recently, Ronald Taylor. Of particular importance is Miss Hamburger's discussion of Liszt's place in the musical life of Hungary. She gives us the most intelligible (and intelligent) account in English of the complex topic of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies and the impenetrable tone that was meant to serve as an introduction to them, *Des Bohémiens et leur musique en Hongrie*. By making a gift of Hungarian music to the Gypsies, Liszt raised a furor in his native country. It was against this background that Tisza declared Liszt to be *persona non grata*. Yet there is another side to the story, and Klára Hamburger tells it with grace and compassion. It is a pity that Tisza could not have read her book. As it is, posterity leaves no doubt who the real patriot was.

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In concert

Malcolm Deas

HOLGER H. HERWIG
Germany's Vision of Empire in Venezuela
1871-1914
285pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
£25.40.
0691 054835

German commerce in Venezuela prior to 1914 had an impressive record of success. German commercial houses dominated the country's foreign trade; predominantly Hanseatic names enjoyed solid prestige in La Guaira, Puerto Cabello and Maracaibo, and were represented by well-chosen and well-trained men in the coffee-growing regions of the interior. Germans adapted particularly well; they were hard-working and disciplined – the merchant houses offered a career and in return demanded high standards. In President Cipriano Castro's appreciative phrase, they "married the daughters of the land". They were often Catholic or became Catholic, and many settled in the country. They achieved their position with only occasional help from the German state in either its pre-imperial or imperial form. They had little interest in extravagant theories of German civilization, in which South America figured prominently, or in any of the excesses of *Deutschtum* that from time to time envoys, emissaries, wives or German Protestant ministers tried to foist on them. Though most at first welcomed some sort of naval demonstration for support and protection in the troubled first years of Castro's government, it is significant that the leading house of Blümling was positively opposed to a blockade: such moves had unpredictable consequences, the sufferings of Trinidad merchants did not concern Germans in Venezuela – they even worked to their advantage – and Blümling had no difficulty in making mutually profitable arrangements even with a régime as disorganized as Castro's.

The main local support (if it can properly be called local) for some sort of intervention in the affairs of the country for the benefit of German enterprise came from the Great Venezuelan Railway and its backers, the Disconto-Gesellschaft and the Norddeutsche Bank. The railway was the largest such German enterprise outside Germany, more expensive than the Berlin-Baghdad railway and, unlike that line, exclusively German. Holger H. Herwig finds some evidence that its origins lay in plans made by Krupp and the banks to counteract the depression of the late 1880s, but the Venezuelan and was ill-conceived from the start: the railway was extravagantly constructed, over-managed, dependent on the British-owned Caracas-La Guaira line for its operation and on a 7 per cent state guarantee for any chance of profit. Given the fiscal circumstances of Venezuela in the late 1890s and the first years of the present century, such a guarantee was unlikely to be honoured. Coffee was down to a third of its 1895 price and, following his own adventurous seizure of power in 1898, Castro was constantly threatened by revolutions.

Bülow, who became Imperial Chancellor in 1900, and Admiral Tirpitz, the Minister for the Navy, were in their different ways open to pressure from the interests involved in this railway. Tirpitz, although unsympathetic to demands for protection from Germans in Venezuela, did like a convenient fuss in the Reichstag from time to time when Navy Bills came up. What appears to have been the deciding factor in the launching of the Anglo-German demonstration of 1902-3 was a desire to do something in concert with the British: this would "raise the Reich's prestige" in South America and elsewhere. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, who might eventually have taken some action on his own account to protest about various outrages and press various pending claims against Venezuela, appears to have gone along with the German *démarche* out of a desire to be seen in concert with the Germans: this might repair the damage that Anglo-German relations had suffered during the Boer War. The blockade did just the opposite: it was greeted in England with resentment and suspicion, followed by the heavy-handedness of the German naval commanders. Kipling's *The*

feeling:

And yet we must take the winter sea
And sail with them once more?

In sight of peace – from the Narrow Seas
O'er half the world to run –
With a cheated crew, to league new
With the Goth and the Shameless Hun.
Castro skillfully combined rallying his country with rapid capitulation, and in the face of mounting United States apprehension about the whole affair both Britain and Germany were glad to bring operations to a quick conclusion and refer most of the claims to The Hague.

Holger Herwig's previous works have been chiefly concerned with the Imperial German Navy, and *Germany's Vision of Empire in Venezuela* is a by-product of that interest. Based on the German records, the book consists of seven essays in which, besides the blockade and its effect on Germany's relations with Great Britain and the United States, Dr Herwig explores the history of German settlement and enterprise in Venezuela, their place in imperial theories and strategic concerns, and the role of German military advisers and naval officers. He is well read in recent controversies in the history of imperialism, and his book holds much of interest for historians of empire, of Germany and of Venezuela. His study of the archives produces a finely balanced account, and a couple of collectable royal marginalia: Vittorio Emanuele III – the Italians had been allowed to tag along – noted that "on such occasions empires have a way of going off on their own", and the Kaiser remarked of Edward's desire to get things over that he was "losing his nerve! Grundmann would never have said such a thing". Connoisseurs of gunboat diplomacy will also learn that in 1897 Germany sent two warships to Haiti to demand an apology and an indemnity of \$30,000 in the case of one Emil Lüders, who had been convicted of making improper advances to a policeman.

Between two evils

John Ramsden

R. J. Q. ADAMS and PHILIP P. POIRIER
The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain
1900-18
295pp. Macmillan. £29.50.
0333 418468

The story of Britain's abrupt shift from a century of voluntarism in military affairs to the organized conscription necessary for waging an industrial war makes an interesting tale. The early prophets of conscription drew their inspiration from the narrow squeak in the Boer War, and had many influential sympathizers. But the spy and invasion scares of Edwardian England had far more impact on naval building than on army recruiting, because the former, unlike the latter, could be stepped up without political risk at a time when party polarization was acute. The efforts of Lord Roberts and the National Service League had little practical effect before war itself began to drive the machine in 1914. Even then the flow of recruits in the first six months seemed to prove the conscriptionists wrong by demonstrating that more could volunteer than the Army could arm or train. It was scarcely noticed that the effect of not having conscription was that enlistment was unplanned, and as a result the government spent the next four years trying to keep an economy running with a deficiency of skilled workers and craftsmen, while the demands of the Western Front were for ever more men of any age, occupation or experience.

Under the stimulus both of unforeseen rates of what the Army called "swagging", and of the tactic of attrition, the inevitability of conscription emerged. Some of the more tough-minded in all parties saw it as an evil that had to be endured if the greater evil of defeat was to be avoided. The way in which the Asquith and Lloyd George Governments inclined towards full conscription is an account of military necessity struggling against political expediency, though an expediency that was as often as not concerned with preserving national unity as well as politicians' skins. It is a story well told in *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain*.

Lost and found leader

Richard Harris

J. Y. WONG
The Origins of an Heroic Image: Sun Yat-sen in London, 1896-1897
330pp. Oxford University Press. £20.
019 5840801

Sun Yat-sen's failed coup in Canton in 1895 marked him down as a dangerous revolutionary in the eyes of the Chinese government in Peking and as an undesirable resident of Hong Kong for the British authorities there. What splendidly launched his career as a Chinese nationalist leader were the dramatic events in London a year later, when he was held prisoner in the Chinese Legation in Portland Place. Released after twelve days into a blaze of newspaper headlines, he was found by the pursuing journalists to be not at all like those Chinese regularly and cruelly caricatured by *Punch*. Here was a modest-seeming young man in collar-and-tie and suit, speaking competent English; even a proclaimed Christian and an admirer of Britain; a spokesman for a new China, who looked to the West for help in rescuing his country from its corrupt and decadent Manchu rulers.

But what exactly happened during those twelve days and who were the chief agents in the matter? How far was Sun himself responsible for the heroic image that attached to him? Not the least question, though a less immediate one, was about the significance of Sun's subsequent nine-month stay in England. Was it crucial in forming the political outlook expressed later in his "three principles of the people"? In several Chinese biographies and in the standard English work, Harold Schiffin's *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution* (1968), differences of emphasis or interpretation on such points persist. J. Y. Wong's book

itself in the second half of 1918, without either a summary or any real conclusion.

The book's title may mislead, for only a fifth of it is devoted to the first fourteen of the eighteen years covered. Consequently, there is only a cursory account of the fascinating Edwardian debate on the coming war, a subject on which David French and others have written illuminatingly. The book's balance may also owe something to its being a collaboration between Philip Poirier and R. J. Q. Adams, who completed the book when Poirier died; Poirier was a fine scholar of the Edwardian period, while his collaborator is better known for his work on the war years. Whatever the cause, this is actually a book on the politics of 1914-18, viewed through one vital issue and overwhelmingly from the perspective of Westminster. There is therefore little sign of influences from the press, from the constituencies or from the wider world. Despite the book's limitations, it demonstrates that during the period when conscription mattered most, it was one of the key not only to victory or defeat but to the rise and fall of parties and prime ministers. Asquith's prevarication, Bonar Law's honest good sense, Lloyd George's political skills and the growing power of organized Labour are all lucidly evoked through this book in relation to an issue that had remained far from the political mainstream until 1914.

A fourth edition of Henry Pelling's *History of British Trade Unionism* has now appeared (344pp. Macmillan, £29.50, 0 333 44285 7). Revisions to the narrative and the bibliography in the light of fresh research since the publication of the third edition in 1976 are supplemented by an extension of Pelling's account of events during these years to new chapters entitled "The Industrial Relations Act and The Social Contract, 1970-9" and "On the Defensive: The 1980s". Of this latter period, Pelling notes in his Conclusion that "if unions were usually defeated in the strikes of the 1980s this was as often due to the fear of unemployment as to any other factor. Nevertheless it seemed likely that the Employment Acts of 1980, 1982 and 1984 would remain on the statute-book

aims to dismiss these doubts by his new and exhaustive research.

Sun's own version, *Kidnapped in London*, does not match other statements made at the time or later. Equally, the evidence given in interrogations of those involved, such as George Cole, the Legation servant charged with Sun's immediate care, or Sir Halliday Macartney, English secretary at the Legation, or Dr James Cantlie, Sun's one-time medical teacher in Hong Kong and his friend and guide during his London stay, not to mention newspaper accounts, all differ.

On one point Dr Wong has convincing new evidence. He was given access to an unpublished diary of Mrs Cantlie, Sun being a frequent visitor to the Cantlie home in Devonshire Street – very close to Portland Place – both before his detention and afterwards, while Cantlie himself was the chief agent in his release. The diary confirms that *Kidnapped in London* was not Sun's work at all, but almost wholly Dr Cantlie's version of what happened. Wong also questions the generally hostile attitude of earlier writers to Macartney, who saw him as playing the part of an obedient servant of the Chinese Minister in Sun's detention. It is true that, as Professor Schiffin put it, Macartney found it "difficult to be both a British gentleman and a Chinese mandarin". His career as a medical officer in the Indian Army had taken him in the mid-nineteenth century to China, where he opted for service with the Chinese government and was active in the suppression of the Taiping rebels. He had married a Chinese woman and would certainly have imbibed enough of Confucian political principles to see Sun's rebellion against the established order in the same light as did his employers. He returned to England with the appointment of China's first envoy in 1876 and had thus worked at the Legation in London for twenty years. But Wong argues that he was by no means a supporter of the Chinese-style justice that faced the luckless Sun.

Other aspects of Sun's experience in this year in England are less precisely defined. Wong has unearthed a previously undiscovered Japanese friend of his in London, Minakata Kumagusu, then temporarily employed in the British Museum. Minakata's diary was published in Tokyo only recently, with many references to Sun's activities in London, not to mention Minakata's own pan-Asian and anti-Western political feelings. But if this pre-dates by a short time the ill-fated Sun's departure for Japan, it is of small significance, since at that time the tide of young Chinese going to Japan would have influenced his development in any case.

As for the heroic image of Wong's title, that theme is here given more weight than it can sustain. On the one hand, Wong argues, it was the British press, Cantlie and others who built up such an image; but on the other, he admits that Sun's was a hermetic, dominating personality. He expected absolute loyalty from all his followers (as his later career manifested) and was out about filling the heroic role in London, for all his outward modesty.

Wong's book curiously obscures the wood with the trees; such is his enthusiasm for any fact that every single sapling in his path enjoys delighted inspection. From the day Sun landed in Liverpool from America, the Chinese Legation, warned by their Washington colleagues, had put Slater's detective agency on his trail, and whole pages of times and places visited by Sun are reproduced here to no particular purpose. Room is found for the name of Cadell's primary school teacher, revealed by a study of *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Banffshire*, for Sun's only known visit to a church (to St Martin-in-the-Fields, with the Cantlies), the *Monthly Messenger* of that parish is scanned to prove that in his sermon that day the Reverend Kito made no mention of Sun.

Sun's willingness to seek British help for his political aims was no doubt stimulated by seeing England at the apogee of its imperial might and splendour. The naval review at Portsmouth, the Queen's Jubilee procession, visits to the Imperial Institute, Crystal Palace, South Kensington museums, the Zoo, Kew Gardens and such like, all counted. But the layout of alphas in Portsmouth is hardly relevant, and the full details extracted from *The Times* of all

The legitimacy of resistance

Alan Ryan assesses a claim – and its implications – that John Locke "was not merely a radical . . . but also a revolutionary, a regicide, and most probably up to the eyeballs in both the Rye House Plot and the Monmouth Rebellion".

RICHARD ASHCRAFT
Revolutionary Politics and Locke's "Two Treatises of Government"
613pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
£25.
0691 077037
Locke's "Two Treatises of Government"
316pp. Allen and Unwin. £25.
0 04 800079 5

John Locke frequently had good reason to hide himself and his work from prying eyes. As secretary, surgeon, friend and political confidant to the Earl of Shaftesbury, he was dangerously placed. Almost as soon as he joined Shaftesbury's household in the spring of 1667, Locke was writing on toleration and the advantages it brought for peace and prosperity. Five years later, he was heavily embroiled in the campaign that Shaftesbury waged against the Catholic friends of Charles II, and in the agitation which he got up when he became aware of the secret clauses of the treaty of Dover.

When Shaftesbury tried to force the dissolution of the Cavalier Parliament, in the hope of getting a House of Commons less well disposed to absolutism and divine right, Charles responded with a bill requiring all members of parliament to denounce the doctrine that resistance to their sovereign was lawful in *extremis*, and to swear that they had no intention of altering the government of church and state.

This set off a pamphlet war in which the king's opponents argued, *inter alia*, that a "standing parliament" was as great a threat to the people's liberties as a standing army, and that the king's ministers intended "to declare the government absolute and arbitrary; and allow monarchy, as well as episcopacy, to be *jure divino*, and not to be bounded or limited by any human laws". Locke may or may not have been the author (or co-author) of the notorious *Letter from a Person of Quality to His Friend in the Country* which pressed these charges in the extremest terms, but he certainly did leave England on November 12, 1675, two days after the pamphlet was burned by the public hangman. He spent the next three and a half years abroad.

When he returned, it was to embroil himself again in the Exclusion Crisis, arguing that a Catholic king, such as the Duke of York would be, could not be relied on to keep faith with his subjects, would exercise an absolute and arbitrary power over "the lives, liberties and estates" of his people, and would therefore be in a state of war with them. What Locke's biographers have not agreed on is whether he went further than simply assisting Shaftesbury in the prosecution of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary campaign to ensure that the Duke of York never came to the throne as James II.

One novelty of Richard Ashcraft's *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's "Two Treatises of Government"* is its insistence that Locke was not merely a radical – that itself sets Ashcraft at odds with most commentators – but also a revolutionary, a regicide, and most probably up to the eyeballs in both the Rye House Plot and the Monmouth Rebellion. Of course, Locke would have had good reason to fear for his life even if he had played no active part in either. A casual acquaintance with the politics of the 1670s and 1680s suggests plenty of reasons why the author of the *Two Treatises* should hurry into exile after the discovery of the Rye House Plot. The *Second Treatise* preaches the supremacy of the legislature over royal authority; it insists that the legislature is the voice of the people and that the monarch is accountable to it; it demands revolutionary resistance to royal authority, and it mocks Barclay's doctrine that resistance is only ever to be made "with reverence". Indeed, it justifies regicide – once the sovereign is cashiered, he is a private citizen and so subject to the law like any other. Algernon Sidney was executed for possessing an account of the legitimacy of resistance less far-reaching than Locke's, though by 1683 Locke hardly needed the execution of Sidney to teach

him that the government was ready to resort to judicial murder to intimidate its opponents.

Maurice Cranston has written of Locke's "particular concern about Sidney's fate" as that of "a fellow intellectual, a fellow Whig theorist". Ashcraft is certain that Locke had even better reason to be afraid. In his opinion, Locke was almost certainly implicated in Shaftesbury's plans for a rebellion in 1682; there clustered around Shaftesbury a group of intransigent republicans, including Colonel Wildman, Robert Ferguson, Robert Wade and Nathaniel West, all of whom were writing pamphlets. "Declarations", and discourses against the day when the uprising would be called. Ashcraft finds it incredible that "Locke was the only unemployed radical in the group, when he, after all, was the chief adviser to the leader of the movement". The *Two Treatises* were not only – as Peter Laslett has so convincingly argued – contributions to the Exclusion Crisis; they were a "theoretical expression of the objectives of the Rye House conspiracy, and of the revolutionary Whig movement".

Locke took care to have his papers destroyed when he fled to Holland in the after-

their peace and went home, he would not. It is, as Ashcraft observes, somewhat surprising that he remained so obdurate; he had bitterly resented his expulsion from Christ Church in 1683, and would, one might think, have jumped at any opportunity to reinstate himself. He did not; he would go home when William of Orange made it possible and not until then.

If this picture of Locke is right, as in essentials it plainly must be, the question the historian of ideas is bound to ask is – how much light does it shed on Locke's political philosophy? At first glance, the answer is that it sheds a great deal of light on Locke's work, but not much that is novel. It takes no very great knowledge to observe that Locke's *Treatises* criticize the doctrine that kings rule by divine right; that they advance the proposition that all authority is limited by the purposes for which it is granted, and that nobody, therefore, can enjoy an absolute and arbitrary power. Even the officer who must have every right to shoot a deserting soldier upon the spot, may not take a step from the soldier's pocket. What anyone is entitled to do is determined by the purpose for which they claim the right to do it. If that much rules out the claims to divine right advanced by Charles II and James II, the conclusion of the *Second Treatise* takes the argument to dangerous lengths by maintaining that even kings can violate the law and that when



J. Abernethy's portrait of John Perceval, First Earl of Egmont, with his wife Catherine, 1738, will be offered by Christie's in their sale of Important English Pictures on July 17.

math of the discovery of the Plot and the trial of Sidney and Russell. This means that we lack conclusive proof of his involvement in the Plot. His correspondence with Edward Clarke, however, seems to show beyond any doubt that he was implicated in Monmouth's Rebellion. Certainly the king's agents in Holland had no doubt that Locke was one of the king's most determined enemies. This was simply demonstrated when James II attempted to conciliate the less intransigent of his opponents by offering pardons to those who would return from exile, and more generally by the Declaration of Indulgence of April 1687 which suspended the penal laws against Catholics and Dissenters and exempted office-holders from the Test Acts. Locke took the hard line of the radical dissenters; the sovereign had no right to introduce toleration by such unconstitutional devices, and the offer of toleration on such terms should not be taken up. Moreover, anyone with half an eye could see that James was in the end only interested in the eventual imposition of Catholicism. It was more important to prevent his attempts to bypass parliament and secure the foundations of absolute power than to secure a short-lived freedom of worship.

Whenever anyone tried to negotiate on Locke's behalf, they were rapped over the knuckles for their pains. The period from 1685 to the Glorious Revolution was a difficult one for the exiles in Holland, as individuals grew homesick and exhausted and made their way back to England. Neither the good offices of the Earl of Pembroke, nor the requests of William Penn, nor the pleadings of James Tyrrell shook Locke's resolve, however. Even when John Trenchard and Thomas Paine made

they do they may be resisted as if they were ordinary citizens. Asserting a right of revolution in the form Locke does is, even at first glance, more drastic than merely defending the right to resist in *extremis*; for Locke is anxious to say that when our rulers aggress upon us, they dissolve the government and set the people free to constitute another. Locke stands to the left of those Whigs who maintained that James II had abdicated in favour of William of Orange; he stands with the radicals who held that the government had been dissolved, and that William did not so much inherit the throne as take it by gift from a legislative body entitled to bestow it where they chose.

All this Ashcraft says, carefully and at length. But few commentators have ever tried to suggest the Locke says anything else. Their ingenuity has been expended on trying to show that what Locke means by saying all this is something else. Richard Cox's *Locke on War and Peace* (1960), for instance, is an essay of quite stunning perversity; the *Treatise* turn out to be a defence of absolute government, couched in a sort of code, in which Locke resorted because he was a secret Hobbesist. As Ashcraft mildly observes, when one considers that Charles II was decidedly fond of Hobbes, but would have had Locke's head for the overt contents of the *Treatises*, such a tale is doubly implausible.

C. B. Macpherson's account of *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1963) has Locke occupying the familiar role of bourgeois apologist. Starting from Locke's assertion that the purpose of all legitimate government is the preservation of our lives, liberties and estates, which he calls by the general name of "proper-

ty", Macpherson goes on to claim that the point of the *Second Treatise* is to justify the absolute authority of the property owner over the propertyless. In case anyone should protest that Locke's defence of government by consent sounds suspiciously like the Levellers' argument for universal suffrage, Macpherson also argues that the Levellers were really not thinking of servants and labourers as part of "the people". "The people" for political purposes was the property part of the community; the others were idle, irrational and dependent.

Ashcraft goes to usefully complicated lengths to destroy this interpretation. It is obvious that Locke was defending property in the narrower sense of goods and estates as well as in the broad sense of "lives, liberties and external possessions". The question is, rather, against whom was he defending them; and the answer rather obviously is against the arbitrary and absolute power claimed by Charles II and his supporters, and absolutely not against the propertyless, but industrious labouring classes.

One valuable feature of Ashcraft's historical approach to Locke is that he has done more homework than most of us could face on the question of who exactly was enfranchised in the seventeenth century. Naturally, the answer turns out to be that it varied a lot from one place to another, and that the answer was always capable of manipulation. What we can't say – and what all too many of us have unthinkingly said in the past – is that Locke could not have had anything like a modern democratic suffrage in mind when he wrote of government by consent. It seems very likely that he did. Those who have wondered how Locke started from Leveller premises and ended up with tamely liberal conclusions need wonder no longer; he turns out to have been more of a Leveller than we thought.

By the same token, Locke emerges with a greater debt to Shaftesbury than we previously realized – though Cranston's excellent biography always argued that it was Shaftesbury who turned Locke into a liberal. Ashcraft goes into greater detail than Cranston had space for, in emphasizing the importance of Shaftesbury's belief in toleration and his hostility to Catholicism. Locke may have been ready to become a liberal before that, however; in the winter of 1665-66 he went to Cleves in the company of Sir Henry Vane, and was deeply impressed by the way the citizens "quietly permit one another in choose their way to heaven". At all events, it was Shaftesbury who set him to demolish Samuel Parker's *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity*, a hardline defence of the magistrate's right to forbid and permit whatever creed he chose. Since toleration was one of the great sticking points in arguments among opponents of the crown as well as in arguments between Tories and Whigs, the wholesale change of heart between Locke's *Two Treatises* of 1660-61 and his later *Essay and Letters* on toleration is the decisive political change of his life.

Ashcraft's two books are aimed at different readers. *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's "Two Treatises of Government"* is as much for historians as political theorists. It is sometimes a little going too far to strictly needs to be, as if Ashcraft has become carried away by his material – every time he mentions another radical, regicide, or adherent of the Green Ribbon Club, he provides a brief "life and times", and few books or pamphlets go unanalysed. It would be ungracious to complain of what, after all, is a fault on the right side, and if Princeton University Press can keep making such big books so easy in the hand and on the eye, let us be grateful for substantial pleasures. *Locke's "Two Treatises of Government"* is more directly aimed at the serious student of political theory. It makes much of Locke's views on natural law, does a very neat job of disentangling his account of what is and what is not conventional in law, property and authority, and throws in some useful thoughts about the way Locke can be appropriated by radical and conservative forms of liberalism. It is brisk, well anchored in the texts and only very slightly inclined to skate over difficulties – such as knowing quite when we are and are not in the state of nature. It will be very useful to good students and a bit of a nuisance to lecturers relying on old notes. One way and another, these books mark a decided step forward in our understanding of Locke's political thought.

The shape of restitution

Alan Hollinghurst

ADAM MARS-JONES and EDMUND WHITE
The Darker Proof: Stories from a crisis
 250pp. Faber. Paperback, £3.95.
 0571 150683

The Darker Proof contains four stories by Adam Mars-Jones and two by Edmund White. Their occasion is AIDS, though that illness is named only once in the book: AIDS, they imply, is a medieval word, a media word, whereas their concern is with lives challenged in various ways by a new and terrible opponent. They call it "a virus", "the illness", "the disease" or, in White's more potent phrase, "the disease after disease". You will find in their pages nothing of agitprop, of arguments about funds and public education, or of the campaigning and political heart-searching of Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart*. They are dealing with the private face of AIDS. Equally, you will not find reflections on the spread of AIDS among the community in general: this is an exclusively homosexual book, virtually misread by women or heterosexual men. It hence has a rather odd profile, opening up a subject, but only so far; making a public plea, but with little almost disquietingly muffled. It is not a book that tells us how to live – or how to die. But it is based on the assumption that what it says concerns us all.

In making their oblique crisis-report available, both authors seem to have tempered their normal styles. Mars-Jones relaxing his discursive precision, White going easy on his harrowing image-making. Even so, they remain worlds apart – or at least further apart than could be accounted for by the Atlantic divide between them. White's stories are rich and layered, alive with beauty, pathos, romance, offering his characters the possibility of being given back to themselves; whereas Mars-Jones's fictions are bleakly linear, as if to speak of lives denied any opportunity of restitution. White at times trends daringly near the sentimental to move us; Mars-Jones, by contrast, is almost abnormally cold and detached, as if for him AIDS were above all an intellectual problem.

This works best in his opening story, "Slim" – a monologue by an AIDS-sufferer that takes us at once into the experience of the crisis. "Slim", an African term for AIDS, is his metonym for the illness, a device like Mars-Jones's own – "I don't use that word, I've heard it enough." The desolation of the piece comes not only from the situation, the "fantastic concentration of misery" on which it draws, the surreal reordering and imbalance of its stricken world, but from the sly, malign humour with which it treats the speaker's buddy, or volunteer helper. Bounding in with hair wet from swimming, Buddy has vitality which is in itself an affront, while to the speaker he seems in turn an anxious victim – of his need to sympathize, to offer help to the helpless. The bugging, for example, that he is encouraged to do is seen as therapy for the huffer: "when Buddy bends over me, I just wait for him to be done, as if he was a cloud and I was waiting for him to pass over the sun. Then we carry on, and I'm sure he feels better for it." The refusal of comfort here extends powerfully to the reader, insisting at once on the duty to care and the powerlessness of care, once given. It is an effectively chilling beginning.

Admirers of Mars-Jones's stories in *Lantern Lectures* (1981) and of his lapidary reviews in the TLS and elsewhere are unable to find his other contributions here disappointing. The trouble is his lack of interest in story as such. The *Lantern Lectures* pieces succeeded as brilliant elaborations of striking *données*: the Queen contracting rabies, the "Black Panther" kidnapping case. Deprived of such narrative climbing-frames, Mars-Jones becomes pedestrian, loses all his concision, is caught endlessly explaining things that do not need to be explained. But it's more than that: where White believes in story as a form of magic, a redemptive shaping of shapeless life and painful death, Mars-Jones has a post-modern, post-modernist's view. There is something apocalyptic in this, of course, when the subject is a new kind of illness that breaks all the old rules and conventions, that cannot be tidied up or mended away. The AIDS-sufferer's life of stunted, falling moments might be said to call for just such a

dispirited methodology. But if this has been Mars-Jones's calculated dare, it must be counted a very partial success.

One could say that Mars-Jones was not so much a story-teller as a scientist, a reader of the signs of homosexual culture. In his introduction to the collection of gay writings he edited, *Mac West is Dead* (1983), he deftly leaves out the dubious implications of various "gay" novels, and analyses the significance in one of them of a totemic leather jacket. "An Executor", in *The Darker Proof*, is about a pair of chaps – leather chaps, and a leather waistcoat. On the death of cultured, cerebral Charles, Gareth, who had been his buddy, is charged with disposing of his "kinky relics", which might have distressed Charles's parents. He removes them from their hiding-places, carries them in his bag to Charles's death-bed, stuns them under his own bed, reflects on their significance ("Leather was less a fabric than a set of meanings"), fails to pass them on to another AIDS volunteer worker, and finally releases them to one of Charles's more pressing friends.

Many adroit observations punctuate the fifty-six pages of this tale, but there is none the less a disturbing sense of intelligence disconnected from feeling. It shows in little ways: Charles, we are told, lived in a shabby building, and so "was spared the irony of physical decline in immaculate surroundings". Well, yes; but on the other hand he was not spared the irony of physical decline in derelict surroundings. On the larger scale, too, there is something disproportionate in the intellectual fetishizing of the leathers in the context of a man's death.

Not that the broadly semiotic method doesn't have its rewards. In "A Small Spade", antibody-positive Neil travels with his uninfected friend Bernard to Brighton for the weekend, and gets a splinter in his finger. It's a plot-synopsis that requires considerable fleshing-out to fill fifty-two pages, and there is much needless detail. Sometimes, though, Mars-Jones opens up a prospect of sudden alarm, ordinary actions charged with new dangers and requiring intimate adjustments: cleaning the teeth might abrade the gums and make them vulnerable to infection; Bernard does not shave before seeing Neil, for fear of cutting himself – when he did he would turn up adorned with sticking-plasters. The splinter, lodged broken under a nail, requires a trip to hospital, declarations and precautions; from this tiny thing hangs a world of implication: "A tiled corridor filled with doctors and nurses opened off every room he would ever share with Neil."

In "The Brake", Mars-Jones is tirelessly explicit with the details of Roger's habits and habitat, his clothes, his hair-clippings, his work-outs, his moisturizers, his penis/testis size-ratio, and so on and so forth. It's not a specifically AIDS story, rather a pursuit of an allegedly attractive gay architect through the pre-AIDS era. The brake is applied when he has a small heart-attack: "Subsequent investigations indicated that he had a faulty valve. It was likely to be an inherited defect, aggravated by a life-style that omitted almost nothing that was hostile to health" (a sentence that incidentally reveals Mars-Jones's innate elegance). At the same time, AIDS is taking hold in the United States, a country Roger has several times visited. A land which has provided, and provided for, so much European gay fantasy is now being blighted by the "illness" – a cultural quandary strikingly demonstrated when a handsome American, laden with signs of his Americanness, enters a London gay bar:

People thrunk back visibly in dress and in posture he was saying, "Hi! I come from a town where people get very sick, and no one knows how or why. Let's talk!" Roger sent his eyes in a slow half-circle across the bar; everywhere were jeans, check shirts, cowboy boots, running shoes, Robert Redford and Marlon Brando imitations. It was like a bar full of anti-Semites with sidelocks and yarmulkes.

Culturally the city had much to offer, was Roger's experience of San Francisco. A strength of *The Darker Proof* is the translation of the exchange of the authorship allows, complicated by the fact that Edmund White is an American who lives in Paris and has an obsession with European culture. Both his stories concern Americans in Europe, in turn become a kind of New World in which a sentimental

re-education must take place now that the sexual free-for-all is over. Mark, in "Palace Days", comes to Paris with his young friend Ned, and in Venice, staying with a friend in a Venetian palazzo, falls in love with Hajo, a wealthy and glamorous German. As before in White's work Europe represents new but old nuances and refinements, an aristocratic fantasia of the homosexual superculture. Hajo's house

was filled with French furniture from the 1920s and 30s and German paintings from the 1980s. A Turkish woman came twice a week to clean but everything was already so scrubbed and gleaming she had little to do except iron Hajo's shirts (he'd sent her for ironing lessons to a friend's maid, a Spanish woman who had once been in service to the Spanish ambassador in Vienna).

(Do Spanish embassies employ only Spanish staff, one wonders? It seems a shame to bring in a mere five nationalities.)

The story has something of Mars-Jones's formal openness, a record of lives coping with abrupt and desolating change, of thoughtless enjoyment meeting an unjustified reward, of lifetime made palpably finite. Mark wanders unexpectedly into his love-affair, finds he has the virus, awakes the end. But for White every day actions and fondnesses are the triggers for emotional release, nostalgia and longing; he is wonderful at the disproportionate emotion attaching to ordinary situations seen in the light of a death-sentence – something quite different from the disproportions of Charles's legacy of leather. "He wanted to know how to

enjoy these days without elapsing them so tightly he'd stifle the pleasure." Of course Mark has not reached the terminal stage of "Slim": he can still look with an appalled fascination at the prospect of certain death, soon, and feel his humane values not annihilated but heightened.

Handsome Ray, in "An Oracle", travels to Crete after his lover George has died. He is doubly tragic – a "young widow" who is also "a ticking time-bomb" – and the unfolding of his affair with a Cretan boy, cautious, courtly, moving by perceptible gradations from mere brisk prostitution to mutual if unequal love, catches up Ray's fantasy as it does our sympathy. "Every one of Marco's concessions meant so much more to Ray than all the sexual extravagances of New York in the old pre-plague days – the slings and drugs and filthy raps."

Both of White's stories resonate with dream-like echoes – in "Palace Days" an imaginal rain and fire, damping and kindling; in "An Oracle" ideas of burial and resurrection, the death rituals of rural Greece, Achilles' words to Odysseus: "Do not speak to me soothingly about death, glorious Odysseus; I should prefer, as a slave, to serve another man, even if he had no property and little to live on, than to rule over all these dead who have done with life." "An Oracle" is the finer achievement, but both stories have endings of failings eloquence. They are fraught, romantic works, and they convince you that they need to be like that.

Moving mountains

Antony Beever

ISABEL ALLENDE
Of Love and Shadows
 Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden
 247pp. Cape. £10.95.
 0224 02812X

Isabel Allende's first novel, *The House of the Spirits* (1984), enjoyed a remarkable international success. It took the twin themes of time and power and turned them over to examine the underside through female eyes. One of the book's main strengths was the intellectual honesty with which Pinochet's coup and its consequent horrors were treated.

Sadly, *Of Love and Shadows* shows little of the same deftness and assurance, to the point that one cannot help wondering whether this was in fact Allende's first novel. Only her considerable story-telling gifts are apparent, and at times even these are sapped by unaccountable *longueurs* and the odd purple passage in which love-making is recounted with relentless use of cliché. It is almost as if Allende, who used to translate Barbara Cartland novels – subversively rewriting them to make the heroines stronger characters – had in the end been slightly corrupted by the contact.

Of Love and Shadows is set in Chile during the artificial boom when Pinochet gave the "Chicago Boys" a free hand with the economy. The bourgeoisie of the *Barrio Alto* is busy buying imported luxuries, while the poor and the remnants of the opposition are silenced by the death squads. The heroine, Irene Beltrán, is engaged to her childhood sweetheart, an upright army officer. She works on a woman's magazine, and, protected by the assumptions of her milieu, remains innocent of what is really happening. But then the "Shadows", the country's vanished dead, or *desaparecidos*, bring her even closer to her photographer colleague, Francisco Leal, the son of an anarchist professor. After an assignment in the countryside, reporting on an epileptic girl reputed to have magical powers, Irene and Francisco become involved when the girl is kidnapped by an officer of the *carabineros*.

They finally discover the girl's body, along with those of many other death squad victims, in a mine. The experience has a cathartic effect on them both and they make love. The next day Francisco passes his photographs of the mine to his brother, a worker-priest, who in turn hands them to the Cardinal to publish. Irene, however, feels compelled to continue the search for evidence that will secure the conviction of the *carabineros* lieutenant re-

sponsible. This reveals her part in the discovery to the secret police.

The plot appears to be an extension of certain basic truths into the realm of personal mythology. Unfortunately, the author does not seem to have achieved enough emotional distance in writing the novel: it badly lacks a clear perspective and a consistent voice. Unlike the powerful, dry-eyed analysis of the regime presented in *House of the Spirits*, the tone here is often distorted by moral outrage, and Allende's occasional black ironies jar badly.

She fails to achieve the effect she wants partly because of all those self-indulgent passages (from the whole Andean mountainside moving for the two lovers to the rather tiresome accounts of Irene's infinitesimal kindness and charm); but also because the novel suffers from a clumsiness of technique. Allende's characters, in spite of their lack of depth, are all perfectly convincing until she burdens them with interior monologues, giving them superfluous roles in a Greek chorus. If all the writing had been as taut and simple as her description of the suicide of Francisco's brother, Javier, this would have been a very moving book indeed. Although Margaret Sayers Peden's translation contains a number of surprising mistakes, it is on the whole faithful and competent.

A series of free public lectures will take place at the Women's Studies Summer Institute, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1, over the following weeks. The lectures are as follows: Thursday, July 16, "Does the Body Speak and What Does it Say?", by Christine Delphy; July 23, "Black Women and Feminism: A global view", by Gloria Joseph; July 30, "Women and the International Division of Labour", by Maria Mies; August 6, "Woman and Literature", by Dale Spender. All the lectures will take place at 2pm. In addition a two-day conference on Early British Women Writers will be held at the Institute on July 27-28, and will feature Dale Spender, Fidelity Morgan, Ros Ballaster, Mary McKerron, Jane Spencer and Kate Flint; and a longer series of public forums under the general rubric "Cross-Cultural Black Women's Studies" will begin on Monday, July 13. Among the subjects included are "Black Women and Work", "Black Women and the Family", "Social Justice and Electoral Politics", "Black Women Writers" and "Black Women in the Performance and Visual Arts". Details and full programmes are available from Margaret Littlewood, C.R.E.G., Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

Puzzling at the past

Jayne Pilling

MARGUERITE DURAS
Les Yeux bleus cheveux noirs
 152pp. Paris: Minuit. 49fr.
 The Sea Wall
 Translated by Herma Briffault
 288pp. Faber. Paperback, £4.95.
 0571 145647

Marguerite Duras's new novel comes, unusually, with a typed insert from the author, telling us that it is "l'histoire d'un amour, le plus grand et le plus terrifiant qu'il m'a été donné d'écrire". An exhortation to the reader follows, in effect a plea for perseverance in face of the novel's difficulty: a shrewd precaution by Duras, mindful perhaps of the vast new readership gained by her recent bestsellers, *L'Amant* and *La Douleur*.

Both these autobiographically inspired books displayed a renewed force and clarity in Duras's writing. Much of her output over the preceding decade had seemed creatively exhausted, desperate even, obsessively reworking texts and ideas in books and films, seeking a language adequate to her needs. *Les Yeux bleus cheveux noirs* is likely to mystify and infuriate new admirers, but reward long-time Duras readers.

"Une soirée d'été, dit l'acteur, serait au cœur de l'histoire" is the first in a series of stage directions and commentary that punctuates the ensuing narrative, "des événements qui seraient survenus entre l'homme et la femme, rien ne serait montré, rien ne serait joué... on ne saurait pas qui ils sont ni pourquoi". The bizarre relationship between the unnamed protagonists is to be read by the reader of the novel and, aloud, by the actors who stand like a Greek chorus on the stage that serves a six-night performance by the couple in this question.

This structure renders synopsis difficult, and the difficulty is compounded by a sense of the ridiculous in describing what happens. A man pays a woman to sleep naked under yellow lamplight every night in his room, to save him, he says, from madness, from solitude. Watching her, talking to her; he can keep alive his hopeless infatuation with another man, glimpsed fleetingly with a woman in a hotel lobby. He does not recognize that she was in fact this same woman, though her blue eyes and black hair remind him of the dark haud-

some stranger. As the nights go by, he reveals his inability to feel for a woman. She tries to engage him physically, via masturbation, oral sex and descriptions of violent sexual encounters with another man, but fails. They talk, sleep, cry – their only moments of intimacy. The ritual undergirds subtle variations, with moments of laughter, fear and violence. Theirs is a voyage au bout de la nuit, in which the impossibility of love is explored.

The sound and presence of the sea, a recurring motif in Duras's work, is constant throughout: a crushing, inexorable force whose ceaseless tidal movement mirrors her characters' desire and failure to establish connection with others. The sea also plays a large role in *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950), Duras's third, formally quite conventional



novel, published in (often over-literal and banal) English translation last year as *The Sea Wall*. Set in Indochina in the 1930s, it charts the struggles of a French widow to wrest a living – and a life – from the land, having to fight against nature, colonial corruption and her own son and daughter (*L'Amant* drew on the same family history). Clearly, the psychological realism of *L'Amant* or *Un Barrage* is absent from *Les Yeux bleus*. A literal interpretation of might seize on the apparent homosexuality of the male character, but he is in fact more of an

extreme embodiment of "Duras man" in relation to "Duras woman": finally unknowable and impossible. Sexual difference, shorn of all social context, is dissected here with a use of graphic, anatomical metaphor quite new in her work. As the actor comments: "il se présenterait comme l'homme dans son absence centrale, son irréversible exteriorité".

On its own terms, the novel remains a puzzle, at best a crude psychoanalytical jigsaw. Yet as comment on and key to Duras's work it is highly illuminating. *Les Yeux bleus* is suffused with echoes, richly refracted, from earlier work. *Dix heures et demi du soir* eu été sets the time, and the place is recognizable, in detail, from the film *Agathe*. The implication of subject, object and reader in the voyeuristic process is haunted by *Le Ravisement de Lol V. Stein*. Reading backwards, as it were, the novel begins to make sense. The author's transpositions of texts and themes between film, novel and play acquire new, exciting perspectives. In concluding, the actor suggests

une dernière phrase... aurait peut-être été dit avant le silence... elle aurait eu trait à l'émotion que l'on éprouve parfois à reconnaître ce que l'on ne connaît pas encore, à l'émotion dans lequel on est de ne pas pouvoir exprimer cet empêchement à cause de la disproportion des mots, de leur maigreur, devant l'énormité de la douleur.

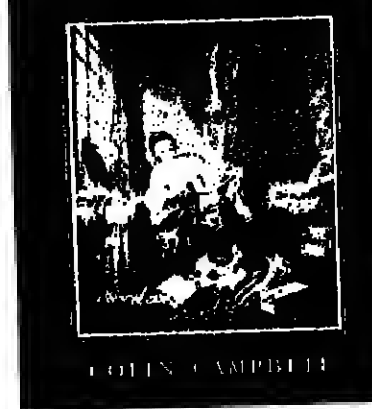
As a description of the entire trajectory of Duras's development as a writer, this could hardly be bettered. She is condemned to perpetual struggles against the limitations of language, and of fictional forms. The experimental urge is almost palpable in the actors' commentary: doomed to a frustrating conditional imperfect. Yet there is also a sense of relief, of triumph even, in the final movement to confront her own, in the present indicative, the nature of the problem.

Duras is now in her seventies, an age at which the past can vividly engulf the present in consciousness. Hence perhaps the power and directness of *L'Amant* and *La Douleur*, which, while clearly relating to enduring concerns, indicated a new direction for Duras's compulsion to write, her fiction revitalized through dealing with those onslaughts of often painful memory. *Les Yeux bleus* seems more of a return to a former style, but a similar retrospective impulse is clearly at work. It's hard to predict how much this would mean to readers unfamiliar with her writings, but for many it could function as a near-perfect Duras handbook.

and perspective. These slippages (and displacements, dispersals and destabilizations) are much admired, and structural figures, frames, screen signs and the fragmented gaze are exposed as the technical and psychoanalytical mechanisms through which everything Duras shows us changes into something else before turning into an enigma.

Homophonic confusions like *Mémoire, finitude* and *névroses* take the ground from beneath the reader's feet and convert the circulating signifiers into riddles, the decoding of which forces us to "rewrite our position, reposition ourselves in relation to the text". Orwell, who also learned as he read, once remarked that there are only two real critical statements: "I like this book" and "I don't like it". Willis does not say whether she likes Duras or not, and seems happy enough to note that there are times when her co-driver "escapes legibility". Some interesting ideas are floated – Duras's "hysterical discourse", for example, or the neat illumination that all her fictions have a privileged moment of convergence, like the bridge in *Les Vieux de la Seine-et-Oise*, through which all elements of her riddles pass – but they are not pursued very far. For this book is less about Duras's desire than about Lacan's, and it will be welcomed by initiates as an immensely confident and articulate celebration of a concept of literature. Reading Marguerite Duras is at times like trying to join up blobs of mercury. But at least the blobs are highly charged and putting them together can result in a nasty shock. For anyone who is unable or unwilling to submit to a transhumance to the Higher Criticism, reading Dr Willis will be like trying to eat soup with a fork.

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Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

"Independence I will ever secure", wrote Mary Wollstonecraft, "by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath." And it has not become a much easier proposition since—at least, not in feminist publishing. Back in May, when Random House acquired Chatto, Bodley Head and Cape—and sparked off much embarrassed speculation about the effects of conglomerates on the culture—it was announced that the fourth member of the group, Virago, had taken the precaution of buying themselves out in advance (for around £750,000) and would once again form an independent company. But things were not all that simple. Virago's directors thought that the agreement arrived at in March and April with Chatto, Bodley Head and Cape included their repayment of Virago's intercompany loan. The group (CBHC for short) thought not: so that Virago found themselves caught up in new negotiations with Random House, once more with the aim of buying themselves out "clean". By the time this appears everything may well be over but the shouting, the press conference, the congratulations. Random House's Simon Musters, now the top executive in charge of CBHC, had invited Virago to remain with the group but faced with its directors' determination to leave, he seems to have contented himself with 10 per cent of the shares, and dire warnings—"It's cold outside, very cold outside." But the barren heath beckons...

Virago's history (often retold) is all about trying to occupy the margins and the centre simultaneously. It was formed in 1973 by Carmen Callil, Ursula Owen and Harriet Spicer (all moonlighting from other publishing jobs) when they were able to arrange their production and distribution facilities through Quartet; in 1976 they became fully independent; and in 1982 they became part of the CBHC group, "as an equal fourth member". The board members of Chatto etc might be said to

nwn Virago, but (Carmen Callil pointed out) "Virago also owns Chatto etc... Virago has a parent, but is also part of that parent...". And that, as it turned out, was the trouble. The group's turnover increased substantially (and so did Virago's within it), but so did their overheads and management costs, with the result that in the past two years Virago for the first time made a loss, though on a turnover of £1,680,000 (compared with £602,000 pre-group in 1981, and a mere £30,000 in 1977, post-Quartet). The group "umbrella" was full of holes. As in Magritte, it was raining pin-striped men. The overheads (secretarial, managerial, legal, including accountancy, ironically enough) were out of proportion to the size of Virago's operation, and largely outside their control. However, CBHC had moved Virago books into the high street bookshelves, the station and airport bookstalls—the chilly but lucrative marketplace where developments like electronic point-of-sale monitoring (for one) register publishing successes and failures with dreadful swiftness.

In the terms of that world, Virago is a "niche" publisher: their audience is well established, trusts the imprint (only Mills and Bown, Penguin and possibly Picador can boast such customer loyalty) and snags up the backlist, which, with almost 500 titles in print, accounts for nearly half of the turnover. As Fay Weldon once pointed out, "the very feel of their books has all but changed the connotation of the word. Say 'Virago' to me now and I visualize an industrious and intelligent lady." The initial socialist-feminist formula worked out in practice as a project for making women's writing available and desirable—a coincidence, in the event, of utopianism and business sense. Virago Modern Classics, in particular, became the "covetable objects" they were designed to be—and have received the *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval: "people like a good old-fashioned read". And sales, led by the Modern Classics, have followed the trends of disposable income (and Tory votes), with around 48

per cent concentrated in London and the South East, decreasing as you move West and North, to arrive at 7.4 per cent in Scotland. (Men, so far as market research can determine, tend to read them mostly at second hand, rather like women's magazines.) All in all, the "niche" is coming to look remarkably solid and well-furnished, perhaps (from some angles) dangerously so. Ursula Owen observes that their first readers are now of course having children ("no question about that market disappearing"), and indeed that motherhood has become one of their readers' preoccupations. Feminist social history, close to the firm's heart (with impressive originals like Barbara Taylor's *Eve and the New Jerusalem*), is proving harder and harder to sell, while more "inward-looking" books are doing well—books about psychology, relationships, the immediate community. Perhaps (Ursula Owen again) "after taking on the large issues, after the political rebellions, you do reasonably then revert to what's happening to the individual"; socialist feminism is under siege, she admits (not least from radical feminist perspectives like Andrea Dworkin's), and increasingly difficult to keep in focus:

Contradictions are the essence, and don't always fire people like dramatic, all-encompassing truths... We seem less puritan now, or at least, less anxious about admitting our weaknesses...

Virago's current divorce from one slice of the publishing establishment does not hide the

fact that they are now very much part of it, for better, for worse. For they are, of course, married to their readers. They plan to capitalize on the rebirth of the hardback book, to do more illustrated high-priced books, and to make much more money (as do almost all "independent" like André Deutsch or Peter Owen) out of sales of subsidiary rights to the big groups. They are also moving further into popular fiction (Zoe Fairbairn's *Stand We At Last* was a breakthrough in this direction, and a best-seller), black writing and teenage fiction (their "Upstarts" series), as well as (possibly) reworking some of their titles as school textbooks. The trick will be, according to Carmen Callil, now the company's non-executive chairman, "to be part of the establishment, but not of it. That's Virago's essential feature—being part of it, but always reacting against it." No publishing house is independent, in truth, the economic and creative sides are not separable (CBHC will handle Virago's sales and distribution for the foreseeable future); if you want to alter the culture you colonize the middle ground. Since Virago decided long ago against contracting their wants, they will never be exactly independent. Whether or not the current buy-out (backed by the owner of Carcanet, Bob Gavron, and Rothschild Ventures Ltd) goes through, they will be in the business of persuading other people to wait what they want themselves.

Hunt the mss

David Sexton

In 1979 Philip Larkin, at the annual meeting of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL); said that "a meeting of British national and university librarians to discuss modern literary manuscripts resembles an annual convention of stable-door lockers". British libraries, he reckoned, had been "comprehensively scooped" by their American competitors; in the past most British librarians had not thought collecting modern literary manuscripts worth while. The title of his talk (reprinted in *Required Writing*) was admirably flat: "A Neglected Responsibility". Last week at the British Academy in Regent's Park another seminar was held by the SCONUL Advisory Committee on Manuscripts: *English Literary Manuscripts: Finding and using the sources*. If the borses have bolted, it is still possible to find out where they have gone. Consequently this was a convention for sleuths.

At the 1979 conference Michael Holroyd and others had launched a scheme for a Location Register for Twentieth-Century English Literary Manuscripts and Letters. We were there this time to be told that the project is nearing completion. Next summer the *Location Register* will be published in "two stupendous volumes" at about £90 the set. Holroyd hailed the LR as "the most radical research tool" to be introduced during his career. When he had started out as a biographer, it had often been possible to avoid libraries altogether and simply borrow manuscripts. "The big business of the international *bourselle* manuscript material" had changed all that.

The actual work on the project has been done by a group at Reading University library, headed by James Thompson, the second speaker. The LR has been put together, he said, on inclusive rather than exclusive principles; when in doubt, include. The criterion for a writer's admission is that he or she has published two or three literary works, but these need not be rated as "canonical" or "serious". Marie Corelli, Barbara Cartland, Nevilla Cardus and John Arlott are in; Bertrand Russell and Michael Foot are out (despite the former's Nobel Prize) as not being primarily literary writers. Wole Soyinka and Danise Levertov make it on their British connections; Oliver Reynolds (b. 1957) scrapes through, despite having begun publishing and logging manuscripts only after the Register was under way. No "papers about" are listed; and only the minimum of information is given in each entry. The ones that "got away" to other countries are not mentioned. Only manuscripts still in Britain have been tackled. However, the Register is fully computerized. The database was held out that, when it has been added to the Re-

search Libraries and Information Network (RLIN) and Online Computer Library Catalogue (OCLC) systems in the States, it might by the 1990s be possible to do a complete manuscript search of the English-speaking world from one terminal.

Thompson advertised the *Location Register* as "a proven machine with a considerable momentum", and presented plans for its extension backwards. This second phase, covering the years 1700-1900, will take a further five years. More money is required. The first phase enjoyed a grant from the Leverhulme Trust, but that cannot be duplicated. Appeals are now going out in all directions. £150,000 has been raised. Another £100,000 is needed. "Are there any rich people in the room?" he wondered. No hands were raised.

The day moved on to what were conceivably *bonnes bouches* for the gathered librarians. Sally Brown from the British Library spoke about Book Trade archives and the possibility of location-registering them (LOBOT, it would be called). Dr Margaret Smith, compiler of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, now being issued in many parts by Mansell Publishing, explained why the *Index* and the LR were not rivals; and spoke sternly of the need to "control" literary manuscripts, with their regrettable tendency to "escape", going off to "where they archivally ought not to be".

Some manuscript users reminded. Pat Rogers let the side down rather by saying "one does tend to know where to look", before ambling through a résumé of the situation in eighteenth-century manuscripts. The increasing use of manuscript material was changing our view of the period, he said, by allowing female writers, who tended not to get published and who anyway often wrote for private rather than public forms, to figure more largely. Robert Bernard Martin was all for intimate contact with the originals, lamenting the unreliability of certain published editions and denouncing photocopies. Tennyson's grandfather had vigorously torn up a letter from his son; Tennyson's father, leaving his enraged thumbprints on it; handling this had taught Professor Martin more about the family temperament than the text itself. Anyway, it was often only in the presence of the documents themselves that researchers knew what questions to ask.

David Vaisey, Bodley's Librarian, summed up for the librarians by saying that "we get obsessed with custody and forget sometimes that the point of it all is use". The participants' small-talked knowledgeably (of the ambience of the London University Palaeography Room, of social friction between Hebraists and Darwinians in Cambridge University Library). One agreeable librarian said to me "I like to meet people who aren't librarians". Guffawed the sun was shining.

Letters

Theodor Lessing and German Culture

Sir,—"Men are accomplices to that which leaves them indifferent." It is this fact which must, I think, make the Jew wary inside Western culture, which must lead him to re-examine ideals and historical traditions that, certainly, in Europe, had enlisted the best of his hopes and genius. The house of civilization proved no shelter; thus George Steiner some twenty years ago in *Language and Silence*. How disappointing that he should now, in his review of Rainer Marwedel's biography of Theodor Lessing (June 26), brush aside the works of a thinker whom he nevertheless describes as "tensely talented... provocative far beyond his powers and, seemingly, empty of repose". For on his own admission, whatever Lessing's faults were, indifference was not one; his very lack of it probably contributed to his brutal death. Lessing, both a tragic and an eccentric figure, will never be fully understandable in the way in which Steiner sees him, as a specifically Weimar phenomenon, or purely in connection with the problem of Jewish self-hatred, or by way of an inevitably invidious comparison with Karl Kraus.

Certainly (as Hans Mayer points out in *Der Repräsentant und der Märtyrer*), Lessing was symptomatic of social tensions in the Weimar Republic, a product of the disillusionment of the German bourgeoisie in the aftermath of the failure of the 1848 revolutions. But Mayer also recognized that Lessing's existence was symptomatic of a crisis in modern culture in that he lived out a conflict between a desire for Enlightenment, for tolerance and humanism, and a philosophical pessimism which despaired of the realization of these ideals. Consequently, much of Lessing's philosophy is in a decidedly post-Nietzschean mode: the rationalization of personal resentments; the now lyrical, now regressive dissent from prevailing social values and dominant cultural ideals.

Furthermore, Lessing's very fitfulness, his lack of indifference, his espousal of various causes which included noise-abatement, women's rights, reform of clothing, and the public defence of a multiple child-murderer (cf. Frederick Grunfeld, *Prophets Without Honour*), typical of the "hunger for wholeness" in the social and cultural criticism of early twentieth-century German culture, are as intellectual social praxis the progressive counterpart of his pessimistic theory of the unreliability of culture and history developed in such works as *Die verfluchte Kultur* and *Geschichte als Singspiel des Stultosen*. The perceptive prophecy about Hindenburg and Hitler—"better a zero than a Nero, but unfortunately history shows that behind every zero stands a future Nero" (more incisive and shrewd than Kraus's better-known comment on Hitler)—which unleashed on him a storm of obloquy, is one aspect of a mind which also produced meditations on the relationship between political power and narrative strategies in the formation of history that can stand comparison with anything by Hermann Bloch on the collapse of cultural values or Ernst Bloch on the localist tendencies of historical time (and about whose Steiner has written eloquently). For Lessing's disputatiousness, "fictitious incompleteness" and pessimism are so many symptoms of the stress of culture, the results of his own terrifying realization that the "house of civilization" could never accommodate his radical scepticism.

Some eminent scholars do take Lessing seriously, most recently Julius Schoeps in *Juden in der Weimarer Republik* (Scheffelin, 1986). But it ought not to be necessary to remind Professor Steiner, who has written so eloquently on German-Jewish issues as well as on the practice of reading, that while there are thinkers whom one admires for their rigour and profundity, there are others, like Lessing, whom one reads almost in spite of themselves and, yet again perhaps, precisely because of their disputatiousness. At least we now have a biography of Lessing, and that makes a start on redeeming his life and work.

MARTIN L. DAVIES,
Department of German, University of Leicester,
University Road, Leicester

F. R. Leavis

Sir,—"I am astonished that Chris Baldick (Letters, July 3) should see fit to complain that I 'interpreted' his review of *Valuation in Criticism* (June 12) as an (ill-informed) attempt to denigrate F. R. Leavis. If it was intended to be anything else, then Leavis certainly doesn't need enemies. I'm bound to say I suspect that Mr Baldick, in alleging that I inverted the sense of his remarks, is hoping that a few of your readers will remember what he actually wrote, and that fewer still will bother to check.

In the first paragraph of his review, after asking rhetorically "who... will find reasons to read him?", Baldick asserts that "Leavis's prospects look especially precarious" and that "his importance in mid-century British culture... could not outlive him". The second paragraph opens by averring that Leavis was "rather a propagandist for criticism than a critic". To say in the third (in which Baldick bravely "counselled against casual dismissals of Leavis's significance") that he achieved the creation of a British intelligentsia and effected a transformation in the idea of English literature, is merely to concede his historical importance; it hardly nullifies the effect of the previous paragraphs, which virtually deny his writings any intrinsic merit. Moreover, the final sentence of the review characterizes Leavis as a "preposterous" figure, and attributes his influence to "his readiness to forsake intelligent criticism" in favour of a "myth".

I will leave your readers to decide whether I was obtuse, dishonest or unfair in concluding that Mr Baldick believed that Leavis is now hardly worth anyone's attention, assuring them (and him) of my complete and unashamed ignorance of any "subversive strategies of re-reading... being practised at Yale or Paris".

M. B. KINCH,
56 Berryl Road, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire.

Reprocessed Processing

Sir,—"R. H. S. Carpenter is of course right to say, in his comment (Letters, June 26) on my review of *Parallel Distributed Processing*, that connectionist models of cognition were advocated thirty years and more ago by people such as Hebb and Rosenblatt, and indeed my review pointed out that connectionist concepts, to use Rosenblatt's term. But most people regarded perceptions as a dead duck after Minsky and Papert's book *Perceptrons* (1969) seemed to prove that they were incapable of modelling interesting cognitive predicates. And in any case, the early ideas about perceptions were surely too hypothetical to rank as concrete scientific theory: where is that early work were the detailed matches between predictions and observed behavioural data which the present-day PDP researchers are producing?

GEOFFREY SAMPSON,
Department of Linguistics and Phonetics, University of Leeds, Leeds

Intervention in Angola

Sir,—"In his letter on foreign intervention in Angola (June 26), David Martin seems to display a pro-MPLA bias: by his omissions as much as by cogent argument. He makes no mention at all of the Alvor accord and glosses over the Portuguese role without making it clear that the Lisbon government at the time was Marxist-oriented.

The ideological multivision of the Armed Forces Movement, allied to Portuguese war-weariness, explains how "permission was obtained from the Portuguese authorities for the arrival of Cuban instructors in October 1975. By November the 'instructors' had been reinforced by advance elements of a Cuban expeditionary force, estimated by February 1976 at over 7,000 infantry, supported by T-34 and T-54 tanks and MIG fighter-bombers, in Huambo province alone.

The point is that under the terms of the Alvor agreement (February 1975) Portugal, the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA bound themselves to form an interim government to hold the ring pending October elections in preparation for full independence on November 11. In the event internal dissension and Cuban and South African intervention scotched both in-

terim government and elections.

However, it is pointless in quibble over troop movements, mileage and dates in attempting to justify Cuban or South African aggression. Two wrongs do not make a right. But there are still Cuban (and Soviet) forces in Angola, while the South Africans have gone.

Surely even now, twelve years after Alvaro, the parties concerned should demonstrate their good faith by giving serious consideration to nationwide elections under impartial supervision. This formula worked in war-torn Zimbabwe, why not in Angola?

CHARLES DUDLEY,
17 Huscote Way, Tilehurst, Berkshire.

Change in the Soviet Union

Sir,—"I would like to make a number of points about the correspondence between Archie Brown, Roger Scruton and Alastair MacAuley.

First, on the subject of the specialist in Soviet affairs: whatever MacAuley may say, the Soviet specialist's relationship with his subject differs from that of his colleague specializing in French or British politics. For he is dealing with a closed world, and the only information at his disposal is that which the Communist régime has deigned to give him or which has been brought out by émigrés, whose view is necessarily biased (although we should not treat it with contempt, as Archie Brown does: we have learnt more about the nature of Communism from the writings of émigrés such as Solzhenitsyn and Zinoviev than from the memoirs of Marshal Zhukov).

The Soviet specialist must therefore realize that he knows little and that what he does know may be misleading. This is obviously a difficult situation for a specialist, but it is better simply to accept it than to launch into wild conjectures which can have no basis. All the more so as the Soviet specialist has his compensations: if it is difficult to understand what is really happening in the Soviet world, Communist power itself is simple and predictable and certain historical insights give the key.

The history of countries under Leninist domination is that of a war fought by ideologically motivated authorities against the civil population. When the authorities come near to total victory, the basis of their power is threatened (famine occurs, or people stop working) and they are obliged to retreat. Society then lifts its head and the party goes back on the offensive. What has been missed by Western observers is that there is never a purely offensive or a purely "liberal" phase. The NEP was a period of increased Communist subversion abroad; just before the great purge Stalin set up a model constitution; after the great purge, he granted an amnesty; Khrushchev published Solzhenitsyn, but finished off the trade of the artisans and small businesses which had escaped Stalinism and launched a vigorous attack on religious believers.

In the light of these precedents, one can venture an interpretation of Gorbachev's "liberalism". The yielding of the party on the cultural front is the sign of a systematic attack elsewhere, an attack which Westerners glimpse only with difficulty while their gaze remains fixed on culture and the media: Gorbachev's offensive is aimed at the managers and the networks of the parallel economy which had time to form during the long and peaceful reign of Brezhnev. It is against the "mafia-like" tendencies within the party, ie. the immersion of the Bolshevik party in civil society, the appearance of real economic interests which express themselves in organized political groups (the "corrupt managers" and their clientele) that the Andropov/Gorbachev team is waging war. This is why, at a time when Pasternak is about to be published, large numbers of people are being shot and arrested for economic crimes, while there is talk of abolishing the death penalty, as under Stalin. It appears that the Leninist party considers the establishment of robust underground systems more dangerous for its authority than the timid writings of an intelligentsia already well ground down by the repressions of Brezhnev. On this subject, I would like Archie Brown to show me the political debates in the Soviet press which arouse his optimism: I have seen nothing to question the nature of power in

the Soviet Union, the leading role of the party; mainly, there is criticism of individuals ("conservative" middle management, lazy workers, Stalin) or "bad management".

As for the cultural thaw, I do not see how the publication of Pasternak or Gumilev, who are in no way anti-Soviet and are totally apolitical, will bring down the Soviet régime. These are merely bones thrown to the intelligentsia and Western opinion while attention is turned elsewhere, to serious business such as the liquidation of the parallel economy and the disarmament of the West. On the subject of *glasnost*, I ask two questions: how many victims did Chernobyl claim? what really happened last December in Alma Ata? The Soviet régime has simply understood that when it is impossible to remain silent about "negative phenomena", it is better to drown them in a torrent of insignificant details. The progress towards truth is minimal.

There is, therefore, a change under Gorbachev: we are dealing with a team that is much more able, demagogic and clear-headed than its predecessor. Never has the gulf between words and deeds been so wide.

FRANÇOISE THOMAS,
50 rue Descartes, Paris 5^e.

'Indian Security Policy'

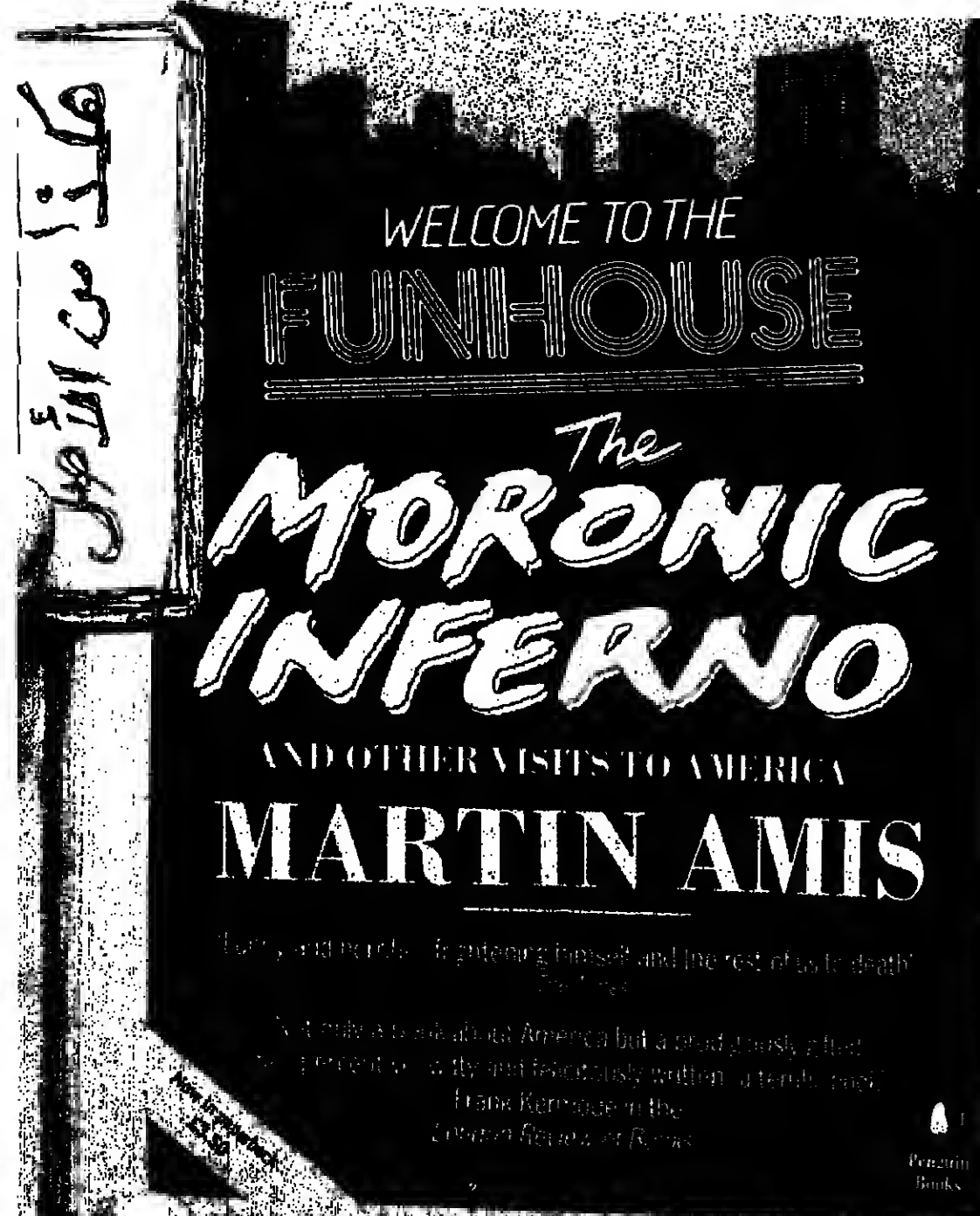
Sir,—"Raju Thomas's *Indian Security Policy* (reviewed by Sunil Khilnani, June 12) repeats two bits of conventional wisdom about India which need to be seen in a historical context.

First, one of the sources of India's strength is described by your reviewer as her "relatively well-equipped and disciplined military which has never so far sought to involve itself directly in the political government of the republic". But why is it that the Indian defence forces have never sought to involve themselves in government? Because military coups were not unknown in the history of India and the defence forces have been deliberately structured, from Mughal times, in such a way as to make it immensely difficult for them to act in concert. The principle of dividing them geographically and keeping an eye on them by means of a secret service system was firmly established in Mughal times; the British improved upon this by subdividing the forces further on a functional basis; and the government of independent India has multiplied both the subdivisions and the number of bodies which keep an eye on them—and indeed on the rest of the country.

Second, Professor Thomas believes that the concept of national security was stretched in the mid-1970s to include internal political activity and resistance. The stretching has indeed taken place, but started in British times with the British defining nationalist movements, especially any movements inspired by anarchist, Marxist or Fascist ideas, as those that we might nowadays call "the enemy within". The government of India inherited such thinking, so that, on the eve of independence, one of the reasons popularly given for the military action against States like Hyderabad (in the middle of the subcontinent) to ensure their inclusion in the Indian polity was that there would then be no breeding ground, no base, for those who might want to subvert India. The pattern of destabilization "in which the external forces hostile to India have been [believed by the Indian government] to be inextricably linked with the internal forces of political and economic subversion" was seen again from the 1950s—now magnified into the main cause of the existence of the Nagas and Mizos struggles against what the Nagas and Mizos perceived as the broken promises of and tyrannical treatment by the Indian government.

The destabilization of governments by foreign influence is not unknown in our time; and, in a country as fragmented and of such geopolitical importance as India, the fear of foreign subversion is very real and very understandable. The question is whether the bogey is raised by interested parties for purposes of internal control and for preventing the truth about matters relating to a particular group of Indians from getting through to the rest of the people of the country.

PRABHU S. GUPTA,
Dico, View 3A Ridgway Road, Farnham, Surrey



Two poems

by LACHLAN MACKINNON

Cairn

There is time for the child to be mistaken.

In his encyclopaedia, a snub-nosed ICBM rises like a milk-bottle from its silo in the artist's uncomplicated vision.

His alive plastic soldiers shift their terrain from the waxed red tiles of the kitchen floor to a cairn of rubble inside the gateless gateway to the coppice he calls a jungle,

to the miniature caves of Borneo or Malaya. It is too late for Suez and too soon for Aden.

He stands in the wilderness and cries / want to go home, I want to go home when he is home, a happy, protected child.

A kniship seals his soldiers' fate and tomb. Going back, he would stand by his own

he comes to feel, feeling the knobby belts on plastic soldiers while he queues to buy a helicopter for his laughter.

Set Texts

Cicero, Livy, Caesar line the walls of a private education. They absorb chalk and sound as they once drew history to themselves, the warm-skinned, untutored Clio.

There must be more than one red maple in Canada, but I remember only the one, flaring on a hillside of evergreens. A rough passage. Only I wasn't abased to cringing from the next heave.

This is a city yearning to be another city. A flurry of leaves. The old, shingled hotel vanished in an eye twinkle - January, when I hardly went out.

I remember that scarlet moribund plumage when I think of the pallid snail-horns of mustard my daughter moistens in her halved, painted eggshells. They feel their way into a covered darkness

as everything must that waits for the great change, to point up green at heaven, to fall short, branching and aimless wishes, volitionless accelerations into privacy.

After the States, we drove up from Southampton to Leeds to sell our house in a beige Hillman Imp, tame and tiny after our green gunmetal Rambler. My veins are a tree planted nowhere.

The outskirts were no longer the blackened back-to-backs where our daily lived, where her husband the gardener took each year's prize for his yard of colour, where their boy, Albert, had a drum-kit and an apprenticeship.

The new towers had rubble up to their ankles, kept their measured distance. Like my placeless public-school accent. Like the sentences in dead languages I served through to their period, to their verbs in the perfect tense.

The accents of adequate praise

Michael Hofmann

ROBERT LOWELL
Collected Prose
Edited by Robert Giroux
377pp. Faber. £17.50.
0571 149790
STEVEN GOULD AXELROD and HELEN DEESE
(Editors)
Robert Lowell: Essays on the poetry
269pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
0521 308720

"His most confident writing, perhaps, is autobiographical." This is Robert Lowell, not on Lowell, but on Hawthorne, and yet it might be at least as true of himself. Autobiography, he said in 1976, was the thread that strung together his life's work, and an autobiography was one of the two prose books Lowell actually contemplated in his lifetime. In 1955, he went to his publisher Robert Giroux and asked for a contract for such a book, as a spur to writing it. He worked on it for the next two years, but progress was slow, and it was never completed. The largest part of it - still invariably called, denigratingly, a "prose fragment" - appeared in *Life Studies* in 1959 as "91 Revere Street". Now, two further pieces from the manuscript, "Antebellum Boston" and "Near the Unbalanced Aquarium", are published in their entirety for the first time. They are so good, so pre-eminently what Lowell is good at, and their period, the late 1950s, is so clearly the best period of Lowell's prose (which seems to be five years ahead of the poetry, whose time came in the early 1960s), that one might have wished for a more permissive editing policy for the *Collected Prose*, more "jumble or jungle", some of the clips of "waste marble" - surely they exist - as well as "the figure".

The more so, as much of the other writing, the critical writing, is just such "waste marble" and "jumble". The second of Lowell's projected prose books was to be called *A Moment in American Poetry*, but its proposed contents went beyond "the generation of Eliot, Frost and William Carlos Williams", to take in subjects some of whom, as Giroux observes in his introduction, with plaintive reasonableness, were not Americans, and others not poets. Apart from his inability to complete either of his prose books, there are other suggestions that Lowell lacked true commitment to the medium. On the subject of his autobiographical writing, he told Frederick Seidel in the *Paris Review* (the interview is reprinted here): "I found it got awfully tedious working out translations and putting in things that didn't seem very important but were necessary to the prose continuity".

As a critic, Lowell has not a fraction of the gifts of his friend and class-mate Randall Jarrell, to whom, in his essays and reviews, he is forever referring and deferring: on Eliot, on Williams, on Frost, on Ransom, on Jarrell himself, "so bewilderingly gifted that it is impossible to comment on him without the humiliating thought that he himself could do it better". Lowell's criticism is short, limited in its occasions, violently evaluative, and, as his Hawthorne sentence suggests, unconfident. Even his stance of not doing "the standard analytical essay" won't quite protect him: Jarrell wasn't exactly the standard analyst either. One might adapt Lowell's stricture on Wallace Stevens - in 1947, in Lowell's strenuous period - and say: "there seems to be something in the critic [poet] that protects itself by assuring that it is not making too much of an effort".

Apart from Dylan Thomas and (I think) Stevens, all of Lowell's review-subjects were personally well-known to him already: they were friends and contemporaries (Jarrell, Bishop, Berryman, Kunz), a former student (Plath), but most often they were his elders and teachers: Tala and Ransom, Eliot, Frost, Williams, Ford. He didn't write more than one or two reviews in a year - each of them was, as Robert Giroux says, an occasion - and his last pieces of that kind were on *77 Dream Songs* in 1964 and *Aril* in 1966. But even though they are personal occasions, there is little of the tone of "O word, I am sorry for you. You do not know these four people," of Pound's poem "Cause". They are neither revealingly private, nor convincingly addressed to a public; there is a middle ground, almost sacramental ab-

out them. In an illuminating phrase on *Via Winters*, he speaks of him not being "adequately praised", and it seems to me it is his "adequate praise" (a dubious, stiff, almost paradoxical notion) that he is most often giving. Lowell is not a proselytizer, not an unrelenting seeker of a constant distance between himself and his subjects; his reviews are not discoveries.

His quick responses to new books or poems seem particularly cluttered and uncertain here, he compares most unfavourably with Jarrell, when he writes about Bishop or Berryman. The much-quoted sentence about Berryman, "This great Pierrot's universe is manifestly and funny than we can easily bear," is a final sentence in the review, is a lot less convincing in context ("hazardous, imperfect book", "relentless indulgence") and conforms to a pattern of final sentences that are little culogistic curls. Again, on Bishop, who was for him the contemporary he most admired, his first response is choked with comparison. "In this, and in her marvelous command of shifting speech tones, Bishop resembles Robert Frost. In her bare objective language, she also reminds one at times of William Carlos Williams; but it is obvious that her most important model is Marianne Moore." Compared to Jarrell, he is unenthusiastic and wooden, not easily fervent or cool, sometimes even without the ability to make himself believed. As Lowell himself admits, he quotes badly, either too much or not at all, with "no gift for the authoritative and lucid comment that someone makes a quotation sail". Though his subjects are all important and survive, one rarely gets the impression that they were important to him at the time of writing (as against, say, Heaney's criticism). In the early reviews, he is doubtful and circumspect, and later - he stopped writing them. (One would have liked to read him on late Bishop, or on European writing, Flaubert and Pasternak - whose names crop up most frequently - or Montale, mentioned in the introduction to *Imitations* as having "long amazed" him, but not again.)

Written, then, out of personal acquaintance and devotion, the reviews really come into their own when the personal or the human is allowed primacy, often in a second short subject, in pieces that recollect or grieve. Lowell's best short prose form is the free personal memoir. After reading him on Ransom's poems, to read him on his "den" or the layout of his garden is a revelation: "His rather repellent and unwayward rows of flowers seemed laid out by tape measure and colour chart. Rather than dwelling exclusively on the poems of *Goodbye, Earth*, Lowell discusses his photograph of I. A. Richards climbing in the Swiss Alps. His short, very funny piece, "Visiting the Bates", word for word the best in the book, gives an objective correlative of the Tate poem:

a tar-black cabinet with huge earlobe-like handles, it was his own workshop. I had supposed that crafts were repeatable skills and belonged to the pedestrian boredom of manual-training classes. However, something warped, fissured, stunted, and jerky about this cabinet suggested that it would be Tate's last.

As well as this boisterous and puzzled intelligence, it also manages infinitely subtle and musical sentences, like this one, again on décor: "A reproduced sketch of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* balanced an engraving of Stonehenge Jackson." The balance extends further than that, though: to reproduced and virgin, rocks and stone, virgin and stonehenge, and to the "o's" of Leonardo and Stonehenge, and the "x's" of Rocks and Jackson.

The circumstantial everywhere outperforms the purely literary. Quoting another critic on "the greatest modern master of the comic" seems even more arid when set against his own mystified, youthful admiration of William Carlos Williams: "I was surprised that Williams used commas, and that my three or four methods of adjusting his lines to uniform type writer spaces failed. I supposed he had gone off to some bold and still more mature system." Wherever Lowell himself can be present or where there are physical circumstances to be described, or far-off events to be related, he gifts seem to blossom: humour, candour, warmth, attention. The best of Lowell always comes out of vents of presence and study. For *Lizzie and Harriet*, his retrospective book of

1973 with its settings of Maine, Boston and New York, is far better than his instant, up-to-the-minute twin, *The Dolphin*, about England. He needs time, research, preparation, revision.

It is the autobiographical pieces that the virtues of Lowell's style, and of his eye and ear, are most evident and free-standing: the sardonic epithets, "interestingly costly", "lethal ferns" or "intense moves back to Boston", all coming out of a loosened awareness of his mother's near-hysterical snobbery. At times, the epithets queue up to make points: "All was hushed, vexed and ajar", or "To be a boy at Brimmer was to be small, denied and weak." There are no fewer than nine of them in succession, describing his father's "rhinoceros hide" armchair, a piece of equipment eminently comparable in monstrosity and symbolic weight to Tate's cabinet. This is "the style that made writing impossible", that Lowell mentions in another context: it is all concentration, all epiphany, all climax. It seems that to drag it from its intense absorption of one object, circumstance or episode to another would kill it. Here, it seems, is style without any outward momentum, style forever wanting to stop and bury itself in a kind of articulate hysteria.

And yet it does move. Among all of Lowell's beautifully produced, high-and-low vocabulary, two words that seem to ring oddly, and to recur, are "enemy" and "brute": Jarrell is "almost brutally serious about literature", Milton is "the enemy" of the English stage. Pound

has written into a copy of *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* "Non... comobruiti", there is "an enemy ring of third-graders", "an enemy charade team". This implies not only intensity but an opposition, a dialectic. In his autobiography, Lowell not only remembers and recreates and invents his childhood totems and taboos, he sees their dependencies: his father's precious masculine chair is broken by his navy chum Commsdr Billy, who sees through his marriage and his civvy street jobs. A Cousin Ledyard "was in charge of a big, sisterly, comfortable but anomalous warship"; "he was himself stately and anomalous", with "icks of experimental firearms, such as pepperbox pistols and a machine gun worked by electric batteries". "91 Revere Street" - Paul Revere was an early PR creation, and his name suggests both reverence and reversal, appropriate to an address "barely perched on the outer rim of the hub of decency" - is full of statelyness and anomalies: the half-denied (Jewish, civilis) ancestry, the sheepish reversal of the name Mason-Myers to Myers-Mason, the humiliations of rank and gender and occupations, where "the sun shone irreverently on our three garbage cans lettered: R. T. S. LOWELL - U. S. N." - initials shared by father and son. Perhaps to be safe from such an enemy, one would have to be a brute, Commsdr Billy, Miss Manic (flying in the face of appearances to proclaim male superiority), the Bescon Hill Irish and Italians, all those raw and vital figures who intimidate the young Lowell. Through all these oppositions, through the infantile cunning

of the baby, and the manic rush of the recent past in the "Aquarium", Lowell's memory, intelligence and reading finally leave him, first among a Negri sect called the Israelites (an episode that is told again in the superb incoherent landscape poem, "The Mouth of the Hudson"), who, like him, the conscientious objector and later the mental patient, believe "But I am black though my brother is white", and that "Only man is miserable"; and then later in another autobiography, that of a Brooklyn bull-terrier, House on Fire. If one cared to equate them, one would have to conclude that by the end of the eighty pages of autobiography, 91 Revere Street would have been razed to the ground, and the aquarium, and "Antehellum Brnston". But instead, the last words are: "I hope there will be peace."

Robert Lowell: *Essays on the Poetry* is a rather up-and-down collection of twelve new essays. It is disappointing to see that no fewer than four of them are aimed at *Day by Day*, Lowell's last book, which I regard as sleek and depressing, but which continues to find hack-ers. At the other end, in a neatly circular argument, Albert Gelpi convinces himself that Lowell's early Catholic poems are his best: "rhetorical density and energy" have it over "inversins and impulsion of linguistic energy". One of the editors, Steven Gould Axelrod, launches an attack on Ian Hamilton's biography (which all the essayists use, and which, not surprisingly, takes up more room in the index than everything except Lowell) which one

would have to call rabid: "antagonistic to his subject", "consistent tone of contempt", "Hamilton's portrait of the artist as a sot". Occasional indications to the contrary are apt to get "lost in the narrative". Axelrod's own inclinations look to me frighteningly mawkish and uncritical. Besides, a biography is a tool which one is free to use or not: I can't see how it should elbow aside the poetry.

It is refreshing, then, to read quite a sprightly attack on Lowell by Marjorie Perloff: "*Poetics Maudis* of the Genteel Tradition: Lowell and Berryman", pointing out his lack of interest in other forms than poetry, his lack of real political commitments, his self-centredness. "Both Lowell and Berryman were, in a curious way, perfect preppies", is her insubordinate bottom line. Still livelier is the wily essay by a poet, Sandra M. Gilbert, arguing with herself about "Skunk Hour", and hazzarding whimsical but possibly apt notions such as the effect on Lowell of feeling trapped (by his date of birth, 1917), in the twentieth century, or even the second millennium! Her essay takes its place alongside those of Berryman, Nims and Wilbur, a detailed, imaginative and uncomfortable sprawl. If Lowell had been able to see it, no doubt it would have sent him scurrying still faster to the refuge he describes in his essay-reply (in the *Collected Prose*) "On 'Skunk Hour'": "I began to feel that real poetry came, not from fierce confessions, but from something almost meaningless but imagined. I was haunted by an image of a blue china doorknob."

Major Man and his muses

Tim Armstrong

MILTON J. BATES
Wallace Stevens: A mythology of self
319pp. University of California Press. £21.25.
0520 049908
GEORGE S. LENSING
Wallace Stevens: A poet's growth
313pp. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. £29.75.
0871 12976
BEVERLY COYLE and ALAN FILREIS (Editors)
Secretaries of the Moon: The letters of Wallace Stevens and José Rodríguez Feo
210pp. Duke University Press. £16.95.
08223 06700
ALBERT GELPI (Editor)
Wallace Stevens: The poetics of Modernism
165pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
0521 302013
JACQUELINE VAUGHT BROGAN
Stevens and Smiles: A theory of language
214pp. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
£19.
0691 066892

Wallace Stevens has occupied a curious position in modern literature. He has provided imprecision and vocabulary for a whole generation of critics, but at the same time he has not in general received the treatment given to most major literary figures: he has been explicated (particularly in recent years, by deconstructionist critics) rather than explained, the man himself remaining mysterious. That situation is changing, with a number of recent works attempting intellectual biography, drawing on the material in the Stevens Archive at the Huntington Library, the oral record compiled by Peter Brazau and other sources in order to provide a fuller picture of the reclusive lawyer-poet and to place him more firmly in the context of his time.

In *Wallace Stevens: A mythology of self* Milton Bates traces Stevens's development in terms of what he calls "fables of identity", the selves which the poet constructed as his career advanced. He writes on parental figures (Stevens's father, George Santayana), on Stevens and his wife (a real and then increasingly imaginary muse), on Stevens as "pure poet", as "Pop" and "Burgher", and the figures of "Medium Man" and "Major Man" in the latter poetry. Bates shows considerable insight both in identifying the issues involved in poetic identity and in tracing Stevens's development, particularly in the difficult early years before Stevens found his "refuge" in the Harbord Accident and Indemnity Company.

His research is meticulous, and he is at his best where he has the opportunity to relate his subject to a specific context: on Stevens's use of his memories of the countryside around Reading, on his courtship, on the way in which the Arensbergs and others drew him into the New York art world in the 1910s, on his debate with the Marxist critic Stanley Burnham in the 1930s, and on his genealogical research into his Dutch, German and Scottish ancestry in the 1940s.

But at other points Bates seems more like a frustrated biographer fleshing out scanty material. Garrett Stevens's bad poems are laboriously searched for contrasts with his son's work, and there are pages of background commentary on Pater and Nietzsche. In his discussion of late Stevens, the lack of the kind of contextual material which Bates makes such good use of in the earlier chapters is often apparent. The fact that Stevens's poetry was mostly written to later life allows Bates to pursue the idea of a "constructed" identity there, but his procedure (thematic readings of major late poems) suggests how aliphey that idea is in terms of a biographical subject. Moreover, the focus on identity means that Bates does not examine Stevens's own descriptions of changes in his life in his seasonal metaphors (a new "winter" after 1947), or the periods (particularly around 1948 and 1951) in which Stevens wrote essays rather than poetry. In order to justify himself.

George Lensing's *Wallace Stevens: A poet's growth* complements Bates's book, and at times overlaps with it as they forage among the same boxes at the Huntington. Faced with the problems posed by late Stevens, he tackles the issue of development in detail only up to *Harvard*, and then continues with a series of more specific essays on topics such as the poet's use of epigraphs, his correspondence, his comments about his own work, and his relationship with Harriet Monroe. He also reproduces, and writes on, two previously unpublished notes on books of Stevens. He is particularly good on Stevens's intellectual development, making use of the annotations in his books to provide a more informed picture of his early reading - particularly of the Romantics and the Transcendentalists - than we have previously had. The chapter on the evolution of Stevens's style is also excellent, having a sharpness of focus which Bates's discussion of Stevens's poetry lacks. Bates's discussion of the 1910s lacks amid the New York poets of the 1910s Oriental influences. Lensing identifies the forgotten art, Post-Impressionism, and the forgotten poet, Paul Gauguin. Because he is not writing about poetic identities, Lensing is more willing to take Stevens to the silences and

emphasize the crises in the correspondence, and one might wish to disagree on general issues like the nature of Stevens's north-south poetics and what they call the "hypocrisy" of his position.

Stevens's "hypocrisy" is also the subject of Marjorie Perloff's essay in *Wallace Stevens: The poetics of Modernism*, which for all its disguise as being about the "impassable lyric" in modernism is mainly an elegant attack on Stevens's WASP racism and his avoidance of the "pressure of reality" asserted by the Second World War. Perloff is stringent, even sardonic, but succeeds admirably in contextualizing the poems that Stevens did write in this period, and outlining the conflict between aesthetic detachment and a desire to engage with the world. Poetic subjectivity becomes, in this account, the stake in a battle about poetic modes and the dominance of the central figure whom Stevens calls "Major Man". Her essay is the best in a collection which claims to provide a new evaluation of Stevens but in fact covers much familiar ground: Stevens and Williams, and two essays on Stevens and painting. Michael Davidson's essay on Stevens's relationship with later poets is useful, though it does little more than explore a few possibilities in a difficult area.

Charles Altieri's essay in the same volume stands in complete contrast to Perloff's lucidity. Altieri's world is a Stevensian one of clashing abstractions, but entirely lacking Stevens's music and easily drifting into bathos ("I stumble with this epistemology") and a hermeticism which obscures what is basically an attempt to argue that Stevens seeks a *via media* between "empiricist reductionism" and "idealist ontologising". Hardly a new claim, and one marred here by Altieri's misuse of a linguistic analysis of the word "us", which he sees as the basis of metaphor. A useful corrective is supplied by Jacqueline Brogan's *Stevens and Smiles: A theory of language*, which, though it contains little real linguistics, does succeed in showing that Stevens used simile as a way of mediating his own simultaneous adherence to romantic ideas of language as being, and a deconstructionist scepticism about all fictions. For all the recent philosophical attacks on the dialectic of reality and language or imagination, all these works affirm, in their different ways, the continuing presence of this Stevensian view of the world.

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Toppling crowns

Steven Runciman

GORDON BROOK-SHEPHERD
Royal Sunset: The dynasties of Europe and the Great War
357pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0297 789449

At the turn of the last century there were only three republics in all Europe: France, Switzerland and San Marino, Andorra being a border-line case and Portugal not expelling its king till 1910. Monarchy seemed to be the generally accepted form of government. The First World War was to sweep away the three most powerful monarchies on the Continent. Royal Sunset attempts to show how the rulers themselves were responsible for their fate. Gordon Brook-Shepherd begins with the Balkan monarchs, first the native-born monarchs of Montenegro and Serbia and then the German-born monarchs of Bulgaria and Rumania, whose ambitions and rivalries led to the Balkan Wars. Greece is omitted, in spite of the part the Greeks played in the Balkan alliances. Presumably this is because there it was the ministers, not the strictly constitutional King, who set the pace. The other Balkan monarchs had a free hand in controlling their countries' destinies; though Carol of Rumania, the worst of them all, was ultimately unable to induce his people to share his pro-German views. Ironically, the Balkan monarchies, with the exception of Montenegro, absorbed into Greater Serbia, survived the First World War, when the Empires fell. It was the Second World War that brought their downfall.

The Balkan monarchs are followed by those of the Central European powers: the German Kaiser, who, though powerful enough to dismiss Bismarck, soon proved to be too theatrical and fantastic to control his army leaders; the good Austrian Kaiser, who by the twentieth century was too old and too badly broken by family tragedies to do more than sign documents; and the King of Italy, which the author calls the "Mink-weight Kingdom", though it does not seem to have made much weight. Then we are told of the inchoate Russian

Empire, ruled by an amiable and ineffectual Tsar who was dominated by a difficult wife; and finally England – the author properly apologizes for not calling it "Britain" – which hardly comes into the same league, as the constitution restricted the monarch's power. Brook-Shepherd, relying on the not always reliable Several papers, perhaps falls into Kaiser William's error of attributing too much influence to Edward VII. The last section of the book is a well-told account of the sequence of events in 1914 that led from the assassination at Sarajevo to the outbreak of war, showing the ultimate impotence of the monarchs to check their ministers.

The book does justice to the unattractive but not unintelligent Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose constructive policy for the Habsburg Empire would have thwarted the creation of a Greater Serbia and so led to his murder, with its disastrous consequences. It is over-severe on Ferdinand of Bulgaria, whose morals were indeed deplorable, but who was a first-class scientist and could be a fascinating companion, and who built up a poor Turkish province into being a prosperous kingdom. It is wrong to suggest that Victor Emmanuel II was considered as a husband for one of Queen Victoria's daughters. The British princess who was thought of as a possible bride for him was her cousin, Mary of Cambridge. It is a little unkind to accuse Victor Emmanuel III of being dull because he took an interest in numismatics, or to imply that Lily Langtry, the daughter of a well-born Dean, was of a low social class; and it seems odd to describe foolish Queen Carmen Sylva as "enchanted". Some corrections are needed in the captions to the photographs. In one group the Empress Frederick is described as the Empress Augusta. The names beneath the photograph of the young Tsar with his cousin the Prince of Wales are in the wrong order; and it is necessary to say that the Empress Augusta is with her eldest daughter when she only had one?

Such defects are minor. In general, the book, though not always very elegantly written, is easy to read, speeded with some pleasant anecdotes, and full of interest. But one is left with the depressing idea that perhaps the imperial families of Europe deserved to perish.

Dead causes

Brian Fothergill

JEREMY POTTER
Pretenders: Claimants to the throne
230pp. Constable. £10.95.
009 458706

It was a clever ploy on the part of English seventeenth-century officialdom to translate the French word *prétendant*, when applied to the claimant to a throne, as "pretender"; for whereas the word "claimant" implies some right or legitimacy, "pretender" suggests the sham or bogus. Though the word may have been used quite indifferently at one time, it is now, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* states, "always applied to a claimant who is held to have no just title". This, of course, was very convenient for those in precarious occupation of the seats of power, for they were able to imply that their opponents were not only wrong but also false.

Of the thirteen claimants mustered by Jeremy Potter in *Pretenders: Claimants to the throne*, some were genuine, some were frauds and some were hardly pretenders at all. John of Gaunt, for example, in his role of pretender belongs to the history of Castile rather than of England; and Henry Tudor as Earl of Richmond, though a candidate for Richard III's throne, did not, in the style of a true pretender, claim that he was the real king and Richard the impostor. He was to wear his crown by right of conquest and could hardly be called a pretender before his victory at Bosworth. More odd than either of these is the inclusion of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Potter's list. A sovereign in infancy, queen consort and then queen dowager of France while still little more than a girl, her only open claim to the English throne was to be recognized as Elizabeth's successor. Mr Potter himself admits that she "barely qualifies as a pretender".

On those more clearly deserving of the name, however, Potter has some interesting points to make. The public at large, he maintains, were more or less indifferent as to "who Pretender is, or who is King", and he claims that the struggle between York and Lancaster

was little different from that between Charles and Stuart in that "both were arguments which those not directly involved took as only out of self-interest", and the mass of people were for the most part left unmoved. Concerning earlier pretenders, he draws a vivid picture of Perkin Warbeck's career, which comes temptingly near to suggesting that really was the younger of the two Yorkist princes in the Tower. Though clearly sympathetic to Mary I he writes understandingly about her dealings with her rival Elizabeth; but it is on the later Stuarts – "the Monmouth, James III, Charles Edward, the Cardinal York – that he is at his best, for he is covering what for many is his own ground. Confirmed Jacobites will reward him, Claire, had wanted the mother of her people, Mary, "to make a smaller dolls' house" for the Stuarts, where they were expected to live. Prince Charles invaded England? The Northumberland and Cumberland amounted to seven, one of them deserted, went sick and another turned out to be a spy. Potter's claim that the Stuart threat to the throne "remained undiminished throughout the eighteenth century" must also be disputed, and indeed he denies it himself later when he writes that "in 1766 Jacobitism was seen to have been a dead cause since the unopposed accession of George III". In fact he embarks on a lively excursion through some of the more quaint byways of English history by showing secure and benevolent George III seeking pension to his aged and impoverished rival. Potter's book is not for the specialist; the general reader will find it provocative and entertaining.

Historical Tables 58BC-AD 1985 (277pp. York: Oarland. \$35. 0 8240 8951 0) is an eleventh edition (and the first revision since 1979) of S. H. Steinberg's reference work, originally published in 1939. It has been updated by John Paxton (who had prepared the edition with Dr Steinberg's widow), to extend chronologies to 1985 – the final items relating to the Anglo-Irish accord on Northern Ireland and he has reassessed some of the entries. 1973-8 and amplified, in the light of new scholarship, those in the medieval period.

and financing of tournaments, stressing the growing financial burden on participants, underlining the extent to which the tournaments far exceeded that of every other type of court spectacle. Two chapters on the available evidence concerning the construction and topography of the principal Tudor tilt-yards, while another discusses Elizabethan tournament *Imprese* and emblematic tradition. The last two chapters deal with the literary aspects of the subject, arguing that the later tournament exhibited thematic coherence between challenge speeches, *mises en scène* and combat itself, this is scarcely substantiated by the sources which suggest only the banalities of court flattery. In it here, especially, that the formality of Young's approach undermines his value. One has only to compare the Elizabethan Accession Day tilts with some of the contemporary Italian tournaments to see what could be done with music, poetry, scenography and overall artistic conception. If we are concerned with the evolution of the tournament as a form in the Renaissance, then the English spectacles must be regarded as poverty-stricken, uninspired and therefore provincial.

Young's text and court calendar – with exception of the sections on the tilt-yard and *Imprese* – are merely a complete synthesis of well-known material which may be found elsewhere. Juliet Barker's book, on the other hand, makes a genuine contribution to the study of the tournament. Organized and presented in tournaments did not always see themselves as seriously as their modern counterparts, however, and both books fail to show the strong element of play. One could guess that knights took a physical delight in the rumbustious exercise, or that courtiers, dressing up, acting and showing off, were scholars make sport and entertainment of a solemn, tedious affair?

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A peep show view

Deborah Singmaster

ANG GARDAM
Through the Doll's House Door
230pp. Julia MacRae. £7.95.
08033 2784

The picture on the cover of *Through the Doll's House Door*, showing an infinity of dolls' houses receding inside one another, is an apt illustration of a concept that keeps recurring in Ang Gardam's latest novel for children. The dolls' house of the title contains a needle-box which serves as the dolls' house. Its own owner, Claire, had wanted the mother of her people, Mary, "to make a smaller dolls' house" for the Stuarts, where they were expected to live. Prince Charles invaded England? The Northumberland and Cumberland amounted to seven, one of them deserted, went sick and another turned out to be a spy. Potter's claim that the Stuart threat to the throne "remained undiminished throughout the eighteenth century" must also be disputed, and indeed he denies it himself later when he writes that "in 1766 Jacobitism was seen to have been a dead cause since the unopposed accession of George III". In fact he embarks on a lively excursion through some of the more quaint byways of English history by showing secure and benevolent George III seeking pension to his aged and impoverished rival. Potter's book is not for the specialist; the general reader will find it provocative and entertaining.

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Equally intriguing is Gardam's original handling of time. "Time is difficult", observes Miss Bossy and children may find it hard to accept that a doll's lifespan can be much longer than a human's. Things happen to the dolls "after a number of minutes or years". It does not matter which. The dolls are only capable of slow, infinitesimal movements: the Soldier manages to climb out of the cat; Small Cry contrives to lodge her body under the roof of the dolls' house, but they are mostly at the mercy of the humans who handle them. "Ah!" said the Cat, and someone came along and removed his head again and it was next Tuesday Week before he could add, "Disappeared?" "Alas!" The actual time span of the novel is approximately twenty years but for many of these dolls' house, with the dolls inside it, is

lying abandoned in a shed after the move to Wales. To pass the time the dolls tell each other their life stories. Miss Bossy's history embodies the tale of the boy who blocked up the hole in the dyke, only it wasn't the boy's finger that saved Holland, it was Miss Bossy's head. The Trojan soldier, although he is only plastic, has hazy memories of the Trojan War and the adventures he shared with Odysseus.

Similarly, the Cat, a souvenir from Tenby, describes Ancient Egypt and his chance encounter with the Christ-child in the desert. At this point wary young readers may suspect the author of having educational designs on them; even if they forgive these they may justifiably resent her occasional flights above their heads, as when the needle-box creatures, who only converse in French, express their anger with cries of "Perfidious Albion. Give us back Calais."

The novel has the slenderest of plots: the dolls' house is played with, abandoned for years, and rediscovered when the next generation is ready to play with it. It is only towards the end of the book that there is a quickening of tempo as Sigger's fate hangs in the balance. For the most part the story is told from the dolls' limited point of view; sometimes this allows us a peepshow view of scenes which Mr Gardam at her best, whether as a writer for children or adults, such as the caretaker's visit to the empty house with her baby Chatty, who takes a fancy to the needle-box.

"He's a funny one is Chat. Mad on things that shine. Like a magpie. . . ."
"He doesn't look like a magpie", said the milkman watching Chatty trying to grab the needle-box again, rolling dangerously sideways in all his woolly layers. "More like an egg."
"He favours his father," said Ma Grudgely.
"There's a lot of that sort of thing in that family. His uncle was a chandelier-maker. It's in the blood."
"Nice little thing", said the milkman, but he didn't mean Chatty. He meant the box.

Many parents give their children a dolls' house, only to find that it is they, and not their children, who are interested in stocking and cherishing this miniature home within a home. *Through the Doll's House Door* is beautifully written and delicately crafted, parents will derive enormous pleasure from it but I suspect that the seven to ten year-olds for whom it is intended may find it just a little too exquisite for hearty consumption.

There's a nice (wist (or submerged subplot) in the fact that this rescued damsel turns out to have had a vested interest in building up Sir Tumbleweed's self-esteem. When he finds her in the castle, lo and behold she is none other than the black-clad, cat-familial witch who at the beginning had found him in the glade and set his quest for courage in motion. She has been the victim of one of those wicked cradle-enchantments, and now sees her chance of release. Her enlightened self-interest directs Sir Tumbleweed's increasingly confident steps and becomes the gilt on his gingerbread. One kiss and the rest, of course, is exactly what you were expecting. Her leathery cheek is suddenly "soft as the skin of a ripe peach" but, conveniently, she doesn't lose any of her magic powers. Hence the lavish banquet with which the book ends.

Tumbleweed contains a delightful cast of characters. A chimney joo, a fastidious charmer of a unicorn called Spearhead who serves as Sir Tumbleweed's light-weight charger in the tournament where he defeats Sir Basil, and, most memorably, a mellifluous Welsh dragon, Mister Jones (Taffy to his friends) who comes over as a cross between Owen Olenflower and Harry Secombe.

A selection of books from the Opic Collection is currently on view at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Among the 200 or so items are the books, working notes and diaries of Peter and Iona Opic. Other items are grouped under headings such as "Nursery Rhymes" and "Games", "Fairy Tales", "Novelty Books" and "Animals". One section, "Some Classic Children's Books", contains important editions of books such as *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Children's Books from the Opic Collection is on show until September 30.

When we first meet Sir Tumbleweed in the mandatory forest glade, he is the one lying on his back. With no head for heights, he has just tumbled wearily off his horse for the twentieth time. By the end of this very readable, witty and fast-moving book, though, Tummy (as Mummy called him) is a weed no longer but is confidently seated at an outdoor wedding banquet with his fair lady. And in full view of the reader he has



Two of Quentin Blake's illustrations to *Don't Put Mustard in the Custard* by Michael Rosen, which has recently been reprinted in paperback (Fontana. £2.50. 0 00 662677 7).

Sinister splashes

Gerald Mangan

WILLIAM MAYNE
Kelpie
82pp. Capc. £6.95.
0224 024222

The kelpie, defined by Chambers as "a malignant water-sprite, haunting fords in the form of a horse", is one of the lesser-known of Scottish bogies; but the breed of Border collie named after it is famous for its obstinate loyalty and uncanny sense of direction. These benign qualities may not derive from the water-horse of legend, but they are shared by William Mayne's charming version of it, which surfaces from a Highland loch one fine summer's day. Kelpie first reveals himself to Lucy, one of a party of Yorkshire schoolchildren on holiday in a youth-hostel, and grows so attached to her that he follows her home, a year later, to be tamed according to traditional specifications.

The story opens during the second summer, when the class has reassembled by an English lake, and sinister splashes take us back to the first. The monster-lore is first recounted by Morag, a canny local schoolgirl who meets the children on the paddle-steamer, and advises caution ("I wouldn't see him if he came in sight, he's so wicked"); but Kelpie very soon contradicts his reputation, by rescuing a drowning calf. He is a bit of a trickster, not above disguising himself as a rock to give an unwary tourist a ducking; but there is something forlorn in his

cry ("a sad as old bottles") that lends a touch of pathos to his unvarying midnight appearance at the window. When Morag suggests that he is searching for his lost brilliance, whose owner will gain the mastery of him, Lucy is convinced that he is appealing to her for help.

Mayne's droll whimsical style draws a good deal of humour from the varying degrees of susceptibility to the apparition. Morag, who professes Kelpie as "a wild thought", is an engaging mixture of the sceptical and the illogical ("Even if you ride him, he's not there"); and the couple in charge of the class, who resort to wilful blindness when the rational explanations run short. ("It's an air-bubble under a rock, escaping"). are forever wearing the wrong glasses at the crucial moment. Lucy is a fine study of a rather private child, obliged to observe her own perceptions ("Sometimes a row of thoughts won't stay still in your mind. One end gets away while you kneel on the other.") And the mischievous Crag, a sceptic with a fetching turn of Yorkshire phrase ("he's chasing about like a scuppern") is a lute and unlikely convert to her faith, who heightens the tension of the climax.

The counterpointing of the two settings may initially confuse some younger readers, but the richness of the cast and atmosphere soon overcomes this, and the suspense is well sustained. With his webbed feet, his mane of seaweed and his skin "clear as spider-silk", Kelpie himself is a memorably mysterious creature, whose final departure has the authentic ring of legend. "Only once in a lifetime, or perhaps only once in a world, can its Kelpies be captured."

from a Victorian drama. In "Homer's Whistle", which is the darkest and possibly the finest story collected here, an adolescent boy contrives a deathly return through time to an idyllic cottage in Devon long drowned under the waters of a reservoir; but his escape is into death, and Homer's friend, the narrator of the tale, sometimes thinks he "can hear the brown wall of water rolling down the valley . . . coming to overwhelm the little house". It is against this brown wall of water that the joy seems sharpest. This minor Aiken book is wise, sturdy, and most welcome.

Four new titles in Moonlight Publishing's Pocket Worlds series are *Wild Life in Towns*, written by Catherine de Sairigné and illustrated by Pierre Denieul (1 85103 022 0), *All About Wood*, illustrated by Monique Félix (1 85103 013 1), *The Sunshine Around Us*, illustrated by Christian Brouin, Henri Galeron and Pierre-Marie Valat (1 85103 020 4), and *Firemen to the Rescue*, illustrated by Nathalia Vogel (1 85103 021 2). The books are short (thirty-six pages) small-format hardbacks intended as information books for readers of six and over. Each has an index and detailed pictures in full colour to illustrate and explain. The simple texts have short sentences with plenty of examples and questions ("Look at the label on your jumpers and trousers. If it has a mark like this on it, it means that they are made of pure wool."). Pocket Worlds are £2.95 each from Moonlight Publishing Ltd, 131 Kensington Church Street, London W8.

This crowded world is full of flamboyant and at times unrelenting melodrama, as undoubtedly befits Aiken's theatrical vision. In "Your Mind is a Mirror", two children begin to tear how to navigate the treacherous shoals of their father's desperate depression, and may have found the key to unlock him from his prison of redundancy, longing and grief. In "Wing Quack Flap", "Snow Horse" and "Potter's Grey", the young learn magically how to sidestep their elders' life-denying iron control over the workings of the world. In "Lob's Girl", a faithful dog returns from the dead to route its mistress from an otherwise fatal coma, in scenes that seem to be resurrected

At full tilt

Sydney Anglo

JULIET R. V. BARKER
The Tournament in England, 1100-1400
206pp. Woodbridge: Boydell. £25.
0851154306
ALAN YOUNG
Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments
224pp. George Philip. £19.95.
0 540011207

Sources for the early history of the tournament, especially in England, are very uneven. Financial records tell us about costs, times, places and persons, but are thin on description; heraldic records are more concerned with rank and ceremonial than with combat; and though chronicles sometimes provide narratives, they are generally sketchy and written by non-experts. Few have ventured into this unpromising area, though Juliet R. V. Barker's book *The Tournament in England, 1100-1400* has been anticipated by Denholm Young, whose seminal article she frequently acknowledges, and by Dietrich Sandberger, whose pioneering work is now being referred to.

Barker begins with a brief survey, autobiographically entitled "The Early Beginnings", of the primitive manifestations of the tournament. She goes on to give a clear account of the relationship between chivalric mock combat and chivalric warfare. The political significance of the tournament is also well delineated: such military gatherings were originally seen as a threat to royal authority but were gradually brought under control by licensing and patronage – respectively, a source of profit and a means of ensuring loyalty to the Crown. There is, too, a sensible and effective discussion of the Church's attitude towards tournaments, moving from downright hostility to ultimate acceptance of a sport "so deeply embedded in

the knightly ideology" that it could not be eradicated.

The development of the tournament as spectacle is associated by Barker with the inspiration of chivalric literature, the idea of courtly love, and the increasing participation of ladies as spectators – all factors which led to a taste for disguise, play-acting and allegorical fantasy – though, as the author acknowledges, these elements were already present in the thirteenth century. As tournaments became more elaborate and spectacular, and therefore more costly, so they became more "court-centred", since the King had greater resources than his magnates; simultaneously, the numbers actually participating in the combats dwindled. The tournament became increasingly exclusive until, by the late fifteenth century, it was social rank rather than military status which determined whether or not a man might take part. All of this is cogently analysed in the chapter "The Tournaying Society", which represents the culmination of Barker's argument. The final two chapters are less impressive, as the author tries to elucidate the forms of combat and the development of tournament armour. As she notes, the terminology of medieval commentators is frequently unclear and imprecise; but her attempt to reduce it to order is unsuccessful, and marred by technical slips. For example, the term *hasardium* (lance play) is used indiscriminately to cover combats fought with sword or axe; there is an anachronistic reference to knights running at "full tilt", before the tilt existed; there is a failure to explain what possible difference there could be between a lance thrust received in a general charge and one received in a joust; and it is wrongly asserted that knights, having completed a joust, did not switch to sword play. It is also a pity that this book, containing so much of solid worth, should have a weak and ill-written conclusion, telling us that the survival of the tournament must be largely "attributable to

the powerful ideology of the romances as typified in romances". Production, too, has its lapses: the index is inadequate and inaccurate, and the proof-reading has left many errors undetected, including at least ten missing cross-references.

Alan Young's *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* – despite being more handsomely printed, with eighty-five well-reproduced illustrations and a solid index – is a lesser work. The illustrations themselves are a mixed blessing because the criteria governing their inclusion is sometimes confused, and the captions are often misleading or incorrect. For example, the manuscript illuminations depicting the Tournament of St Inglevert of 1393 show knights tilting. The anachronism is, of course, the illuminator's, but it should have been pointed out. Another plate shows the combat between Astley and Boyle in 1441, but the illustration is a century or two later than the event it depicts, and Boyle was not slain – as the caption states. Two drawings are reproduced from College of Arms MS M 6, and we are told that neither can be dated, though the manuscript is "probably Tudor in origin". In fact, we know that the manuscript is a heraldic mid-range started by Thomas Hawley and continued into the reign of Elizabeth I by his successors; and Richard McCoy has convincingly attributed the section with the relevant drawings to Robert Cooke, whose career at the College extended from 1562 to 1586. To a note at p 213, one of these illustrations is compared with the "inferior copy" in British Library, Harleian MS 69; yet three other illustrations are reproduced from the Harleian manuscript rather than from the original and superior version.

Young's text is less accident-prone. A cursory sketch of the early English tournament is followed by a more detailed narrative, reign by reign, from Henry VII to James I; and Young provides a clear account of the organization

Face to face

Thomas A. Sebeok on forms of nonverbal communication, from the thumbs-down to the "language of flowers".

G. CALBRIS and J. MONTREDON
Des Gestes et des mots pour le dire
159pp. Paris: Clé International.
2 19 033 276 1

The ironic curse of the communication sciences is their failure to adopt a consistent terminology. Take, for instance, the correlated designations, verbal/nonverbal signs. While everyone knows that "verbal" is equivalent to "by means of language", the domain of the "nonverbal" is, to all appearances, unbounded: the genetic code, the immune code, the metabolic code, the neural code, each uses a system of nonverbal signs. All animals, too, communicate nonverbally, and this is true of man as well, although some members of our species—infants, not some aphasiacs—have at their disposal, in addition, a sophisticated array of intertwined verbal signs.

What nonverbal signs bind humanity together? The "language of flowers", enshrined in loving detail by Kate Greenway in 1884, consisted of a remarkably complete listing of floral tributes, with their symbolic meanings; this rainbow of colours and scents is, of course, a language only metaphorically. A Japanese rock garden, or, in the optical mode, Fri Pandolf's last Duchess painted on the wall, have in common the crucial fact that both are devised of nonverbal signs. I. M. Pei's memorial to John F. Kennedy is a composition of steel, mirror, glass and cunningly deployed emptiness furnished only with an emblematic token of the Stars and Stripes—its subtle blend of iconic, indexical and symbolic nonverbal aspects—stocked by each visitor's imagination.

The concept of nonverbal communication, in the broad sense, encompasses much, much more: that huge segment, in fact, of the entire range of human behaviour that is not specifically linguistic; and even the latter is so intimately interwoven with the former that it takes expertise to disentangle them.

During speech, the linguistic stratum proper, according to some researchers, engages less than one per cent of the total information in the vocal tract. The remaining 99 per cent consists of such features as those which help hearers to recognize a speaker as an individual, and to make judgments about his somatic traits: for instance, such enduring characteristics as a cleft palate, or such transient ones as his suffering from a head cold at the time. This carrier also conveys intelligence of a typological nature—of age, sex, build—and expressive features, referring to emotional moods (anger), attitude (sarcasm, intimacy), and a whole set of what linguists call voice qualifiers (whining, whispering), to say nothing of clues as to social and professional standing and to geographical provenance. All these, and more, are subtle nonverbal cues, or indexical signs, packed into the sound wave. The context, too, is always determining: sometimes, when a message is meant to be encoded as a verbal string, as by a mother or a pet owner, it is taken and decoded by the baby or pet addressed as just another nonverbal signal.

Indeed, it is questionable whether so broad a concept can be usefully sustained. Accordingly, many specialists in nonverbal communication elect to narrow the strategy of their investigations, although they don't all necessarily focus on identical segments. Some consider appearance as a whole to be their subject, optionally including clothing and adornment, but usually just posture and spatial organization. They often concentrate on just a single or a few adjacent portions of the human body. Of

the latter, the face is of paramount importance, as Hippocrates and Charles Darwin of course well knew, as John Liggett has maintained, as Paul Ekman continues so adroitly to document. Noam Chomsky has even foreseen the development of a perhaps universal "grammar of faces". The eye, its movements (gaze), are explored, using tags like "pupillometry", by different authorities.

The study of gesture in its several manifestations, or of gesticulation, as it is sometimes called when it co-occurs with speech, looms as one of the principal topics in the nonverbal domain. Emblematic gestures—a notion introduced in David Efron's exemplary work to designate an arbitrarily coded movement which refers to an object by means of a pictorial sign such that this has no topological relationship to the object represented—have been and are an early and continuing preoccupation of investigators in and of Western Romance speech communities.

The Italian Canon Andrea de Iorio wrote the pioneering, most complex and thorough treatise in the field, predating by forty years (1832) Darwin's classic work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. It was a masterful study of the mimic art of the ancients, reconstructed on the basis of contemporary Neapolitan gestures, "an extremely exact guide", as he put it, "from the known to the unknown". This was followed a century later (1932) by Giuseppe Cocchiara's very different *Il linguaggio del gesto*, a monograph he conceived and wrote in London.

Until lately, the only available "Guide to French Body Talk" was Laurence Wylie's waggish *Beaux gestes* (1977), which he says he conceived during the year he spent mingling with young students at the Jacques Lecoq School for *Mime-Mouvement-Théâtre* in Paris, but which, alas, is restricted to some seventy ges-

tures that had appeared, to the eminent professor Emeritus of French Civilization at Harvard, to be "unusual or amusing". But there is the mini-dictionary, "Dictionnaire des gestes et des mots pour le dire", each year accompanied by a sparkling, often droll drawing by Zaü, inviting ready imitation.

Over 150 emblematic gestures are identified in terms of a simple, transparent code, reference to one of five parts of the body (head (in five movements), the hand and the arm (also five), finger (two) and the mouth (again)). One example, the celebrated "barbel", will have to suffice to illustrate authors' procedure. First, they describe the action by saying that, for producing this, the reverse side of the fingers is repeatedly rubbed vertically against one's cheek. The specificity that this gesture can be substituted for verbal locations (which is what makes it an emblem). Then they comment that, accompanied by a nictus and with the eye rolled upwards, the gesture conveys, as it were, "You bore us with your stories!" The book expands that the sign stands for "Resignation" or "Depression", and connects it with the authenticated and, in fact, quite different Roman imperial down-turned thumb, meaning "kill". Among the instances given is that of a woman who speaks of her old despoiled mother: "Rien à faire, elle", where the task marks the synchronization of the gesture.

The overall objective of this handsome, easily portable register is to demonstrate the importance of French gestures embedded in and supplementing (verbal) discourse, "les variantes de forme et de sens, son lien légé avec les expressions imagées, ainsi qu'une spécificité culturelle". I will certainly lend a copy to my teenage daughter for her use travelling in France; but I want it back.

Bakhtin in Italy

Nicholas Cronk

BICE MORTARA GARAVELLI
La parola d'altri: Prospettive di analisi del discorso
163pp. Palermo: Sellerio, L12,000.
M. A. BONFANTINI and A. PONZIO
Dialogo sul dialogo
199pp. Ravenna: Longo, L22,000.

"The word in language is half someone else's": Bakhtin's dictum could stand as an epigraph for either of these books, for both start out with Bakhtin to explore from different angles the sociality of language. Bice Mortara Garavelli's concern is with the mechanisms by which the language of others, "la parola d'altri", is appropriated by our own. The phenomenon of free indirect discourse, or *style indirect libre*, first described by Charles Bally in 1912, has come in recent years to occupy an increasingly important place in the discussions of literary theorists, as internal monologue has become an increasingly prominent feature of modern fiction. The traditional approach to free indirect discourse was to describe it as a "realistic" device which was supposed to underpin the verisimilitude of the narrative by bringing the reader into direct contact with the thoughts and feelings of a character; more recent theorists, however, have tended to emphasize its problematic aspects, pointing to instances where, far from heightening the immediacy of a character's thoughts, it serves actually to cloak them in indeterminacy.

Mortara Garavelli strides confidently into the thick of this debate, engaging with all recent combatants, Anglo-Saxon, French and German, while proceeding with her prime objective of describing the criteria characterizing the different varieties of reported discourse. Sweeping aside the traditional view that indirect discourse can be derived by means of grammatical transformations from some direct equivalent, she joins other modern theorists in asserting that morphosyntactic features alone cannot adequately identify reported speech in any of its various forms. But where does this leave us? Having tired us out with this familiar impasse, the author now reveals an alternative to the formalist and bibliographic approach. The categories which Bakhtin

establishes in his book on Dostoevsky completely cut across the time-honoured division between direct, indirect and free indirect discourse, with self-reflecting "double-voiced" discourse becoming a paradigm for literary discourse generally, and Mortara Garavelli is able to exploit Bakhtin's notion of polyphony which sees language as intrinsically quotational, to remould our understanding of the strategies by which different voices become absorbed into narrative discourse. In the first part of the book, she dissects a long series of examples, ranging from Boccaccio to the present day, and painstakingly describes how free indirect discourse is identified by certain formal markers in what she terms personal and temporal systems. *La parola d'altri* is the first book-length attempt to employ Bakhtin's theory of polyphony to further current debate about reported discourse, and it establishes an important direction for future research.

Polyphony is again at the centre of the *logo sul dialogo*. M. A. Bonfantini and A. Ponzio (who has already written extensively on Bakhtin) here consider how polyphony is embodied in dialogue, and their book, an exemplary piece of Bakhtinian writing, is made up of a sequence of dialogues between themselves and sometimes other contributors, even on one occasion including the voice of a reader. Discussion ranges extensively, across time from Plato to Galileo, and across multifarious themes; summed up in the throwaway subtitle of the book ("dove si parla di filosofia, scienza, utopia, semiotica, musica, poesia, ecologia, costi via discorrendo"). Though not conceptually axiomatic with dialogue as a literary genre, the authors do conceive of dialogue as a form of intertextuality, so that they, like Mortara Garavelli, make polyphony pivotal to literary discourse. Certainly on the showing of these two books, Bakhtin's impact on literary theory is currently being felt more keenly in Italy than elsewhere.

The English Dialects of Ulster: An anthology of articles on Ulster speech, by G. B. Adams, edited by Michael Barry and Philip Tynes (194pp. Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra Manor, Holywood, Co. Down BT16 0BU, £5.95), contains eight linguistic papers, and an appreciation and bibliography by the late Brendan Adams.

Green thoughts

Timothy O'Riordan

MARION SHOARD
This Land is Our Land: The struggle for Britain's countryside
390pp. Palatin. Paperback, £5.95.
0360 08473 8

The future of Britain's countryside dominates "green" politics these days. Greenism, as understood in other countries such as Germany and Sweden, is of course much more than a campaign to protect pretty landscapes and wildlife, but it suits the main British political parties to confine the "green" label to issues of countryside salvation and pollution control rather than to take on ideologies. Marion Shoard is a skilled writer, who has advised the Labour Party. The media, and hence the public eye, were first drawn to the countryside debate because of the strong criticisms of farmers as destroyers of wildlife and attractive scenery contained in her book *The Theft of the Countryside* (1980). Her call for bringing all farm development decisions under local authority development control raised a storm of protest from the landowning classes.

These classes are the particular target of *This Land is Our Land*. Shoard is obsessed with their power, privilege and wealth, finding it intolerable that they spend huge amounts hunting and shooting wild animals for pleasure, and that they can withhold vast areas of open land from public access, as well as alter beloved features of the landscape without reference to taxpayers and food consumers, who primarily finance their enterprises. She wants

to make this elite pay for the damage she alleges it is inflicting and also to ensure that it is accountable to democratic controls.

Her argument is cleverly constructed. She documents with some care the history of land ownership in Britain, placing a refreshing emphasis on Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as dealing with England and Wales. She provides a comprehensive summary of the pattern of modern land ownership, divided between royalty, the public agencies and government departments, and the owner-occupiers. This is no easy task as there is no land register in Britain—Shoard would like to see rectified. Her theme is that the bulk of the countryside (between 20 and 30 million acres) is still controlled by a small number of people, certainly fewer than 50,000, who have vast influence in politics, local government, the conservation and land development agencies and the professions who manage land. Her findings are not surprising: the social history of Britain has been dominated by landowners, with their entrenched wealth and status and, thus, power.

In order to make more land accessible to more people, Shoard puts forward a series of controversial proposals, which include a tax on all rural land and a statutory public right of access to the open countryside. She accepts that the European Community's subsidies which currently support British agricultural interests, and which, according to some of the estimates she cites, are worth some £20,000 per big farm—over 300 acres—per year, are unlikely to be removed in the foreseeable future, but believes that a rural land tax would counteract their effect. Its proceeds could go into a countryside fund from which to pay farmers who

primarily finance their enterprises. She wants

Thanks to super-brain

Mark Ridley

LYNN MARGULIS and DORION SAGAN
Microcosmos: Four billion years of evolution from our microbial ancestors
301pp. Allen and Unwin, £12.95.
004570015 X

The microcosmos is the world of micro-organisms, particularly of bacteria, and *Microcosmos* is a popular scientific book about their importance in the past, present and future of life. The book also gathers together the ideas which are always stimulating, often questionable and occasionally perverse—that Lynn Margulis has written about in several earlier popular and more technical books. The ideas move so rapidly that, on the whole, the authors do not find time to examine them critically and do not provide the reader with enough material to do so for himself. It is hard to believe a lot of what the book contains—and difficult to imagine that the authors believe it, even in their quieter moments—but it is worth taking seriously, because one of the authors is an expert.

The recurring theme is the relative importance of the microcosmos, and the unimportance of humans. As Margulis and Sagan like to point out, the micro-organisms can get on without us, but we cannot get on without them. Bacteria "occupy and are indispensable to every known living structure on the earth today". "We may pollute the air and water for our grandchildren and hasten our own demise, but this will exert no effect on the continuation of the microcosmos." The microcosmos will take it in its stride even if we blow up the world in a nuclear war, for "there has always been a huge reserve of radiation-resistant" forms, such as *Micrococcus radiodurans* which "has been found in the water used to cool nuclear reactors".

In Margulis and Sagan's view, bacteria seem to be everywhere and to be responsible for everything. There are millions of them, dividing rapidly, in every habitat, including the various parts of the body. Indeed, in a sense, we are built of bacteria: "our own bodies are composed of ten quadrillion animal-cells and another one hundred quadrillion (100,000,000,000,000) bacterial cells". All the main breakthroughs in the history of life were the achievements of bacteria. They put

the oxygen into the atmosphere when they invented photosynthesis; they fix nitrogen into, and release it from, the soil and air; they might be responsible for the deposition of iron ore, and for precipitating gold from river water and concentrating it in river beds—which is the source of most gold now mined.

After the bacteria had established the atmosphere, they went on to evolve more complex forms of life. If Margulis is correct—and this is her most famous theory—the more complex eukaryotic cell (which we are made up of) evolved as a symbiosis of bacterial ancestors. Parts of this theory are widely accepted, parts are not. In its most questionable development, Margulis suggests that bacteria evolved mobility by the symbiosis of mobile spirochetes (the agent of gonorrhoea is the most famous member of this little-known group) with non-mobile cells. And this line of theorizing leads Margulis and Sagan to an even more original suggestion: the bacteria, they claim, may have invented the conscious thought. The argument seems to go like this. First, tubulin, an important chemical in brain cells, is also found in the motile apparatus of other cells, which Margulis and Sagan trace to the spirochetes. Second, in something called the "Gala hypothesis", the bacteria of the earth, acting as a whole, are said to form a metaphorical super-organism, which maintains the earth's biosphere in constant good health—and super-organisms have super-brains, of course. Third, bacteria did everything else, so why shouldn't they have invented thought too? Thus "the possible cybernetic control of the Earth's surface by unintelligent organisms calls into question the alleged uniqueness of human intelligent consciousness". We may find the argument difficult to follow. We may even suspect it is nonsense. But it is all good fun.

Popular books on evolution have made almost a cliché of their mission to save humans from the deadly sin of pride. It is no longer a strong theme, and these authors themselves forget it from time to time. A disapprovingly long chapter on human evolution seems implicitly to contradict human insignificance. But *Microcosmos* hangs together well, as it moves quickly from one remarkable bacterial achievement to the next. If some readers come away feeling no humbler, all will have learned about some new ideas, and new discoveries. The book is a light and pleasant read, easy to digest, although British readers should be prepared for many Americanisms.



One of Patrick Sutherland's photographs from *Wetland: Life in the Somerset Levels* by Patrick Sutherland and Adam Nicolson (151 pp. Michael Joseph, Paperback, £9.95, 07181 28974).

manage land in such a way as to meet national and local environmental requirements. In essence she is advocating a cross-subsidy between the damagers and the nurturers. Those who undermine what the public allegedly wants from the rural areas would be penalized and those who take care of those areas would be rewarded. Landowners would have to produce farm plans which would be surveyed by the local authority and other relevant interested parties. Connected to that plan, but not necessarily a part of it, would be public access agreements in the woods and valleys which are currently reserved for the pursuit of blood sports. Farmers would have to present a plausible case in order to have their land exempted from public access. The bias would be reversed from one favouring the landowner to one favouring the citizen. These imaginative and exciting ideas do not have political currency, but their time may yet come.

The feasibility of Shoard's proposals can be challenged on two points: whether they are politically realizable and, if so, whether once adopted they could be made to work efficiently. Inevitably, the forces Shoard so dislikes would mobilize politically to block any serious attempt to carry out her suggestions. Parliament and the shire authorities, which are controlled by landed interests, would not be enthusiastic, and even the conservation lobby, which is, as she rightly points out, landowner-dominated, would be unlikely to advocate her proposals. In any case landowners would undoubtedly appeal to the EEC courts on the grounds of the British Government's imposition of an unfair burden on the agricultural industry of one of its member states.

It is less easy to predict whether the legislation Shoard proposes would produce the outcome she desires. She is vague about the terms

Living on the edge

Jeremy Swift

MICHAEL ASHER
A Desert Dies
330pp. Viking, £12.95.
067081264 1

Michael Asher lived and travelled with the nomadic Kababish in northern Sudan from 1982 to 1985. He is well informed about Kababish economics, politics and history, and he is an accurate observer; he avoids obvious errors about things like desertification; he speaks Arabic and he writes well. But his main virtue is that he writes intelligently and perceptively about the daily life of these camel herders in a way that few anthropologists or voluntary development workers, today's chroniclers of remote peoples and places, can do.

On the wrong side at the time of the Mahdi, the great federation of camel nomads known as the Kababish seized their chance with British rule and prospered. Many of the traditional powers of their paramount chief or *naqir* are still recognized by the Sudanese government. He is the ruler of a territory in north Kordofan of 50,000 square miles; a wild, hard country which suffered particularly in 1984, when many

thousands of Sudanese herders and farmers throughout the country died of starvation.

Asher lived with the Kababish both in the *naqir's* camp and with many humbler people. He helped them to bring a self caravan down from the oasis at el Atrou in the Libyan desert, and to run a mob of camels across the desert to the Nile, to be sold in Egypt. He lived as one of them, taking his turn at armed sentry duty, sometimes hungry and thirsty, shot at, alternately confident and distrustful of his companions. Like other desert-crazy Englishmen before him, he went in search of the fabulous oases of Zazurum.

The book ends with the great drought of 1984, when the Kababish were forced south and to the outskirts of Khartoum by hunger and by the death of their animals. Asher does not portray them as noble savages. There are good and bad among them, and though much of their existence is, to us, quite extraordinary, much of it is also quite banal. They live on the desert edge in an economic and ecological symbiosis of great merit. The 1984-85 drought was not the first for them, nor will it be the last. They are now recovering slowly and with difficulty from those hard years. Books like Michael Asher's help us to understand how such people live, and why it is important that they should survive.

THE TIMES

Abuse (äbiä-z), v. ME. |-(O)
Fr. abuser, † 1. Sc. To disuse
-1471. 2. To misuse; † 3. To
misrepresent; to adulterate;
† 4. To misuse any one's
confidence; 5. To ill-use 1586
6. To violate, arch. 1539

Way of the word

Use and abuse has transformed the English language. In Thursday's *Times*, Peter Ackroyd reviews *The Compact Edition of The Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, which embraces the vast changes since 1933, plus Longman's *Dictionary of Contemporary English*

and regularly in *The Times*, Philip Howard (right) on words, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, David Miller on sport, Irving Wardle at the theatre, Jane MacGillivray on wine, Clifford Longley on the Church, Jonathan Meades on eating out, David Robinson on the cinema, David Sinclair on rock, the unique *Times* crossword—and much more each week.



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